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CHILDREN

VIEWED IN THE

Light of Scripture.

BY THE
REV. WILLIAM REID,
LOTHIAN ROAD UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, EDINBURGH.

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HAVING preached a sermon on the death of children, a desire was expressed that I should publish it, for the benefit of those who had experienced the trial. While most willing to comply, the thought was suggested, that the whole question of the duty of parents and the Church, as respects children, might be so represented as to be even more generally useful; while the death of children is not without most salutary lessons, it is their life and not their death, which chiefly calls for solicitude and pious endeavour; and this impression was confirmed when, on inquiry, I could find no book constructed upon the plan of presenting a *résumé* of Scripture teaching concerning the young; hence this publication.

I may also state, that since taking my place more frequently in the pew beside my own children in the public worship of the Sabbath, and observing more

closely how they, and others of their years, were affected by the service, I have been led to the conclusion that, as in the family so in the Church, they have not been adequately cared for. It is, no doubt, true that the Sabbath School aims at their spiritual benefit; but as parents and the Church must ever remain chiefly responsible for their religious training, I have endeavoured to exhibit what seems to me necessary to a right performance of their respective duties. Till parents more distinctly recognise their responsibility, and the Church better adapts her services and operations to the capacity and necessities of the young, the best vantage ground will continue to be yielded to the enemy. If, then, this book shall in any degree beget a deeper interest in the children of the kingdom, and a better adaptation of the means of grace to their salvation, the object of its issue will be amply gained.

MERCHISTON PARK, EDINBURGH,
January 1872.

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Part First.

THE MISSION OF CHILDREN.

THE NATURE AND DESTINY OF CHILDREN.

THE DESIGN OF CHILDHOOD.

THE INFLUENCE OF CHILDREN.

"Now, to me there is no study half so delightful as that of these little creatures, with hearts fresh from the gardens of the sky, while they are indeed a mystery, a fragrant, luminous, and beautiful mystery. And I have an idea that if we only had a name for the study, it might be found as attractive and as popular, and, perhaps, about as advantageous in the long run to the future fathers and mothers of mankind, as the study of shrubs and flowers, or that of birds and fishes. Then, why not pursue the study? The subjects are always before you. No books are needed, no costly drawings, no lectures, neither transparencies nor illustrations. Your specimens are all about you. They come and go at your bidding. They are not to be hunted for, along the edge of a precipice, on the borders of the wilderness, in the desert, nor by the seashore. They abound, not in the uninhabited or unvisited place, but in your very dwelling-houses, about the steps of your doors, in every street of every village, in every green field, and every crowded thoroughfare."

Real.

I.

THE NATURE AND DESTINY OF CHILDREN.

"Advance, then, ye future generations! We would hail you as you rise in your long succession. We bid you welcome to this pleasant land; we greet your accession to the great inheritance which we have enjoyed; we welcome you to the blessings of good government and religious liberty; we welcome you to the treasures of science, and the delights of learning; we welcome you to the transcendent sweets of domestic life, to the happiness of kindred, and parents, and children; we welcome you to the immeasurable blessings of rational existence, the immortal hope of Christianity, and the light of everlasting truth."—*Webster.*

THE first thing that strikes us on looking at a child, is its physical conformation;

> "A lovely being scarcely formed or moulded,
> A rose with all its sweetest leaves yet folded;"

and still undeveloped as are its powers and symmetry, its tender frame, so full of promise, begets the admiration of all who may gather around its cradle. So still in its slumbers, that it seems rather the ideal creation of artistic genius; and yet, within, every organ of a human being is in harmonious and healthful operation. For years the child re-

mains one of the most helpless of all God's creatures. We judge of the height of mountains by the low valleys from which they rise; and so God would the more impress us with the majesty of a child's nature, by the feebleness in which it takes its beginning.

The sculptor may chisel from the marble the image of your friend. It may seem to smile; but if you speak, it answers not; if you embrace it, it responds not: it is a cold, dead, passionless thing. So is it with all the forms of matter. But who can measure the powers and capacities of the soul? what is the height to which it has not soared, or the depth to which it has not reached? The mountain rests immovably fixed on the plain, the sun circles undeviatingly in the same course, the ocean swells and rolls majestically within the boundaries assigned it; but who can fix a limit to the range of the soul? Matter in its most refined combinations and most beautiful forms, is matter still, and subject to the law of corruption and decay. The world itself is a dying world, and the day is coming in which it shall groan in death agony; the stars shall cease to shine; even the great sun shall expire; but that tiny creature, so delicate and feeble, shall never die. With what a dignity and value does this fact invest a child! The impress of eternity is upon its brow!

What then is a child? A child is the miniature of a man. No attribute pertains to humanity that is not his. Will, judgment, memory, affection, conscience—all are there. Unseen, it is true, because undeveloped, but who shall predict the limits of those powers, which the slightest mishap would seem adequate to extinguish? The men and the women who have filled the world with admiration of their achievements, once lay helpless infants on their mothers'

knees. The most wretched child which obstructs your path and dissembles a deeper wretchedness as he implores your alms, carries beneath his rags, a gem which crowns and kingdoms could not purchase.

Nor is it merely intellectually that children are distinguished; morally they are even more so. In the very infancy of our being, how wide is the distinction between them and the lower animals. Though birds and beasts may be trained to perform a thousand things, and imitate many human acts, they can never be taught to distinguish between good and evil, nor to feel the force of moral obligation; but long before the child can understand the grounds upon which moral obligation rests, the distinction between right and wrong is recognised and observed.

How singularly interesting, too, is the moral condition of a child. Of depravity we shall yet have occasion to speak at length; but the absence of it in its matured and more revolting forms, and the manifestation of natural loveliness at this early stage, present children in an aspect singularly attractive. "In what innocence is it wrapped," says Gilfillan—"as if in swaddling bands of snow! No envy wrinkles that smooth brow, no lust and no hatred lurk in that heart, no fury burns in that clear, mild eye,—its only food is milk, and its only sin is tears. In what blessed ignorance it dwells! It knows not of God, but neither does it know of His many foes and rebellious creatures. It knows not of good, but neither does it know of evil. The alarm of war it never heard; the blood-spotted and tear-stained records of the sad history of humanity it never read; of the folly, falsehood, cruelty, impiety, and madness which dwell in the heart and blacken the life of man, it is altogether unaware; and yonder spring rosebud, first meeting the smile of the

light, is not more unconscious of the rude realities of the world than that newly-budded babe. Beautiful, all this. But there is a period a little further on, when the child becomes more interesting far,—that is, when the soul awakes within it, and the coming forth of the evening star from a mass of clouds is not so beautiful as the first awaking of immortal mind in a child's eye; and when the heart awakes within it, and its smiles are no longer undistinguishing, and no longer aimless, but become deeper in their significance, while equally sincere; and the understanding awakes within it, and proceeds to ask questions which no philosophy and no theology have yet been able to solve; and the power of speech awakes within it, and its tongue overflows with that artless but piercing prattle which is more delightful than the murmur of streams."

Much speculation has been indulged as to the time when moral responsibility begins. The horrible theory has even been broached, that all dying before becoming moral agents are annihilated, inasmuch as in that case they are not accountable creatures, and therefore not subjects of praise or blame, reward or punishment. The idea is at variance with all our conceptions of the soul's immortality. For aught we know, the existence of the soul may date from the first stage of the body's formation; and if so, it is opposed to the benignity of the Divine character, and the idea of immortality, to suppose that an immortal creature should be annihilated. If even children may be sanctified from their mother's womb, as in the case of John the Baptist (Luke i. 15), then from the earliest stage of being they are moral and immortal. We know not how long children may exist without the exercise of moral agency, or if they exist at all without moral agency. The idea of there being a

point at which the child emerges from a state of mere animalism into a state of moral being, seems to be without any real foundation in fact. If a child learns more during the first two years of its life than in any two years that succeed, is there with this intelligence no moral agency? Before the child has learned language, and received aught of that instruction of which language is the medium, it evidently exercises moral affections. A child of a few months' old will recognise its mother's authority, and evince a susceptibility to moral impressions. Nor are we left to search for the reason of this. The law, written on the heart, is there. Who knows but that the smile with which a child rewards a mother's love is of the nature of moral agency? Love we know is the fulfilling of the law, and here is love responding to love. How soon do parents treat their children as worthy of praise or blame! Do they not from the first dawn of intelligence, applaud or censure them, reward and punish them? Here, then, is a very early recognition of moral agency. That God deals with children differently from what He deals with those of matured faculties, is evident—just as a human government deals differently with a child and a full-grown man; but the fact of this difference does not necessitate, I conceive, a denial of the moral agency of even infants.

The natural disposition and intellectual characteristics of children invest them with peculiar interest. The baby in its mother's arms has already gone to school. Learning begins with the first opening of the eyes—with the first outstretching of the hands. Size, distance, form, colour, are the subjects of its study; judging, comparing, discriminating, remembering, are the first exercises of its mind. Children, too, are free from the pride and affectation of

superiority, so offensive to true simplicity, and which classifies men and women with all the rigour of a natural law. The child of a prince will find a congenial companion in the child of a peasant. They require no mystic password to secure the freest intercourse in their wide extended brotherhood. Every object is to them a novelty, and there is no end to their interrogations. Nor do they ever doubt the truth of what they are told. This credulity, allied with the liveliness of their imagination, invests the fables and fictions of romance with a mighty charm. "Heaven," says the poet, "lies about us in our infancy," but it is a heaven of the imagination. The child lives in an ideal world. From the dismembered fragments of accumulated toys, he will construct railroads, and build ships, and marshal armies: while his little sister, from similar materials, will furnish a mansion, from the attics to the kitchen; visits are paid and returned—"dolly" gets sick, and the doctor prescribes—medicine is administered and chastisement too—entertainments are provided, and a generous hospitality dispensed. Such is the ideal world in which childhood lives and moves. Thus it subsists in a world of poetry, and with all the qualifications of death and disease, it perhaps affords us the nearest ideal of the experience of a state of innocence. It is not so much the pleasures of hope, in which we then luxuriate, as the pleasures of imagination. The pleasure is present. The future enters comparatively little into a child's conceptions. We must emerge from childhood before we begin to look into the world beyond. It is the credulity of childhood to which this is mainly owing. To a child, everything within the sphere of vision, and the sphere of imagination, is beautiful and real. The faith in its parents, which God has implanted in the child's heart is marvellous. Ten

thousand lies will it accept before it suspects deception. "That we should be more credulous in childhood than in mature life," says Dr Thomas Brown, "is not wonderful, when we consider that the probabilities of truth are always far greater than the probabilities of falsehood; that the discovery of many of the possible motives to falsehood, on which our doubt in after life is founded, requires an analysis much nicer than children can be supposed to perform; and that it is the very nature of the mind, when untrained to habits of reflection, to think only of the majority of cases where the number is very greatly superior, and to forget the few exceptions." Whether or no this is an explanation of the fact, the fact is undoubted.

But it is only by the light of Scripture we recognise a child's real purpose and place. Wherever the Bible is unknown, "these little ones" are despised. Among all the nations of the heathen, children are regarded as things of nought, and murdered by their parents without compunction. What religion, save that of the Bible, ever made provision for the welfare of children? What God but the God of the Bible, ever regarded them with tenderness and care? Among all the gods of paganism, to not one has been ascribed the guardianship of infants; while to many, their death agonies have been regarded as an acceptable sacrifice. How different from all this, are the representations of Scripture. "Happy," says the Psalmist, "is the man that hath his quiver full of them" (Ps. cxxvii. 5). To many, David's happiness is incomprehensible. I can recollect a very worthy lady, a woman of superior intelligence and wisdom, to whom such blessings had been denied, arguing upon the felicity consequent upon such immunity, and telling me that daily she thanked God that among His many gifts, He

had not included children; and thus she expressed herself, while a group of little birds, which her maid had taken from a nest in the garden, sat perched upon her shoulder, and upon which she lavished an affection that would have sufficed for a nobler brood. Doubtless the difficulty of providing for children in a land such as ours, where the population so greatly exceeds the productive capabilities of the soil, contributes to this undervaluing of children, but in other lands they are estimated differently. Lately I was visited by an elder of one of our American churches. He had emigrated nigh forty years ago, and now returned to revisit the place of his birth. On narrating his experience abroad, he told me how that on penetrating the far West, and viewing the scene of his future life, his heart had failed him. Far as the eye could reach, nothing could be seen but the wide extended prairie. No school, or church, or dwelling-place. The choice, however, had been made, and there was no alternative. To work he went, and although years passed away ere either law or Gospel obtained a public recognition, the most essential requirements of civilised life were ultimately secured; and now the solitude has become a populous land, and he the owner of a farm of four hundred acres. That, contrasted with the condition of a weaver lad in his own country, says something for piety and energy when they find scope for their development. On asking if he did not think of returning and ending his days where he had begun them, he replied, "But for the boys I would. Here there is nothing for them, while in America, every lad that can handle a spade may have as a free gift from government, one hundred and sixty acres of the finest land under Heaven." It is easy to understand how that in such a land children are readily accepted as among the best gifts of God.

But even in our own country, children have in general a distinguished place. How their advent is hailed and their death lamented. To Christianity especially do children of Christian homes owe the deference that is paid them. It is Jesus who has lifted them up, and set them in the midst. There is not a child in Christendom, but sleeps safer in its cradle, because Jesus lay in the manger at Bethlehem—not a mother fondles her child, but fondles it more lovingly, because Jesus has enlarged her heart. Children have their own place in a parent's affection; and their own place in the social state, because of Christ's interposition. Jesus has made legible the true nature of childhood, by taking it to Himself, and passing through all its stages of development to His Mediatorial throne. How few, notwithstanding, estimate children and childhood aright. Were the future made as palpable as the past, what might we look upon? Among the crowds which throng our lanes, and gambol on the village green, might be seen the gifted and the powerful, the poet and philosopher, heroes and martyrs, the exalted and the lowly, the scourge of his species, and the daring defier of God, the favourite of thousands and the forsaken of the world. Had we eyes penetrating enough, the history of the future might be read in the children of the present. Men there have been, however, with foresight sufficient to treat at least becomingly those young in years. It is related of Tribonius, a German teacher, who lived nigh four hundred years ago, that he never entered his school without taking off his hat and bowing to his pupils. On being asked the reason, he replied, "Who can tell who may arise from among these young persons?" Nor did he surmise without cause, for there sat on a form before him, Martin Luther, "the solitary monk who shook the world."

II.

THE DESIGN OF CHILDHOOD.

"Ten thousand blessings on sunshine, for sunshine is one of the dearest blessings of earth. Clouds are drifting as we look out of our window, but we know there is an ocean of sunshine beyond. And then we look back over the pathway of years, and see in the distance a land all sunshine—the land of childhood. Its golden light lingers there yet. It beams upon us in the mid-day of our years; and so it will linger and fade beautifully out in the evening of life. The sunshine of other days is treasured in the heart, where it will ever glow pure and warmly upon the altar of better memories."—*T. W. Brown.*

IF nothing be created without a purpose, and that purpose worthy of a God of infinite wisdom, may we not believe that the mission of children is great and beneficent? Why are there children in the world? Why does God not create man as He created angels, each member of the race a separate creation, and each created like Adam with fully developed powers of mind and body? Various answers might be given to the question. One great end was doubtless to constitute a federal relationship, or to constitute one man the federal head or representative of the race. Other and subordinate ends are, however, secured by the arrangement, and it is to these specially I desire at present to direct attention. Children have a purpose and a place in life just as certainly as have men and women; but while their presence is every-

where felt, it is to be feared that few recognise the fact of that purpose and place as it ought to be recognised. Jesus, we are told, "called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them." The place assigned that child may be regarded as symbolic. Whoever despises children, Jesus does not.

1st, *In regard to the design of childhood, the first thing that strikes us, is the purpose of the susceptibility and docility of children.*

So susceptible is infant nature, that like an Æolian harp, it responds to the faintest breath. A smile begets a smile, anger begets anger, love begets love, joy begets joy. The child, too, is moulded according to the moral and emotional atmosphere in which it is nurtured.

But it is not only susceptibility which characterises children. Along with this is the entire dependence of the child. Others must do everything for it, or it perishes. Food, clothing, shelter, must be provided; books, schools, teachers, companions, amusements, religion, are all in the choosing of others. Now it is this divine constitution, which places the child so entirely at the disposal of others; indeed it almost lies passive in their hands to be moulded by them at their will. That such a fact gives parents a mighty advantage in the training of their offspring is evident.

And what an advantage, too, does it give to the friends of all enterprises which aim at the social, moral, and religious improvement of the race. Jesus discovered His profound insight, when he took a child and set him in the midst. What preacher, when despairing of the old, has not turned hopefully to the young; and if in our efforts for the social reform of our country we have been met by the sneers or

indifference of those of mature years, the young have not so treated us. "Forward to the victories of peace and love, the children of a new-born race, a noble army, go. God speed them; and God help us to speed them on their way." It was one of the tactics of ancient warfare to poison the wells of the country, and thus convert the means of life into an instrument of death; shall we not rather set a guard around the very spring of human existence, and thus give peace to our homes, and health to the nation?

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Life, doubtless, takes its colour in a great degree from childhood. Even old people live much in the past. The scenes and experiences of early years are the subjects of daily recall. "Childhood," says Vinet, "is a paradise that we all pass through with light and rapid steps, and into which we may not re-enter; but we love to look back on it, however far away we may be; we love to give it a farewell glance; we gladly turn an oppressed burning brow towards the fresh air that is breathed there, and associate ourselves with the impression of that regretted age, so as once more to become, for a brief while, children—that is the first

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It has been remarked that love descends. Thus God's love to us, and our love to our children. While this is true, the relation of parent and child is fitted to beget a mutual affection, which is fraught with the most blessed results. The dependence of the child affords daily and hourly opportunities for the nurture of this affection. While the affection of a child for a dutiful father is strong, it is peculiarly so for the mother. This may arise from the fact that as the father exercises authority, and maintains the discipline of the family, he becomes more an object of reverence; while the gentleness of a woman's nature, and the affectionateness of a mother's heart, enlist more strongly the affection of the child. She it is who meets most tenderly our infant wants, lifts our little hands and teaches our lisping tongues to pray, upholds our faltering footsteps, and guards us through the wayward paths of youth; whose voice so sweetly soothes us in our grief, whose hand and presence are so grateful in our sickness. Thus mother and child become as truly one, as two distinct personalities possibly can be. A touching instance was recently narrated in the public papers. Some gentlemen passing through a rural burying-ground late at night, found a boy of tender years lying on his face. On being awakened, and interrogated, they learned that he had come from a neighbouring town four miles distant; and that on a relative threatening to beat him, he had fled to his mother's grave, and there had wept himself to sleep. And yet it is not till we reach mature life, we become fully aware of the hold our mothers have got of us. It was the beautiful remark of a friend, on expressing how he felt on the death of his mother:

"We all thought she was depending on us, but then we learned that we were depending more on her." I have always regarded it as one of the happiest circumstances of my own life, that I was blessed with the best of parents. My father was a man of rare accomplishments, and great amiability and affectionateness. Most distinctly can I recall instances in which he showed womanly care and tenderness. My mother seemed cast in even a nobler mould, although in common with those of her rank in that day, she was destitute of my father's culture. She added to a vigorous mind an earnest piety; her word was law; most rigid was her discipline. Nor was she by any means lavish in her demonstrations of affection; indeed, so far as I can remember, she was, till my eighteenth year, regarded by me more with awe than with love. Yet while scarce a night passes, without her form appearing in my dreams, and that at a distance from her death of full twenty years, it is only on rare occasions the image of my father is so recalled; but this has struck me even more, that while she died in her seventy-sixth year, it is not my mother bent down with age who then re-appears, but my mother as she looked in the years of my childhood.

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It must have been in view of this interesting instance of a mother's influence, that Willis penned these lines:

"My mother's voice! how oft it creeps
In cadence on my lonely hours,
Like healing sent on wings of sleep,
Or dew to the unconscious flowers.
I can forget her melting prayer,
While leaping pulses madly fly,
But in the still, unbroken air,
Her gentle tone comes stealing by,
And years, and sin, and manhood flee,
And leave me at my mother's knee."

Wendel Phillips relates an equally striking instance of the influence of a mother's counsels. "A mother," says he, "on the green hills of Vermont, was holding by the right hand a son, sixteen years old, mad with love of the sea. And as she stood by the garden gate one morning, she

said, 'Edward, they tell me—for I never saw the ocean—that the great temptation of a seaman's life is drink. Promise me, before you quit your mother's hand, that you will not drink.' 'And,' said he (for he told me the story), 'I gave her the promise, and I went the broad globe over, Calcutta, and the Mediterranean, San Francisco, the Cape of Good Hope, the North Pole and the South. I saw them all in forty years, and I never saw a glass filled with sparkling liquor, that my mother's form by the garden gate on the green hill side of Vermont, did not rise before me; and to-day, at sixty, my lips are innocent of the taste of liquor.' Was not that sweet evidence of the power of a single word? Yet that was not half. 'For,' said he, 'yesterday there came into my counting-room a man of forty years, and asked me, 'Do you know me?' 'No.' 'Well,' said he, 'I was once brought drunk into your presence on shipboard; you were a passenger; the captain kicked me aside; you took me to your berth and kept me there until I had slept off the intoxication. You then asked me if I had a mother. I said I had never known a word from her lips. You told me of yours at the garden gate, and to-day I am master of one of the finest packets in New York; and I came to ask you to call and see me.' How far that little candle throws its beams! That mother's word on the green hill side of Vermont! O, God be thanked for the mighty power of a single word!"

Now, but for the relation of parent and child, there would be no such guardianship of life. Had we been created as were the angels, each a separate creation, and thus destitute of the ties which the parental relation begets, no such union of hearts would have sprung up. Even under the present constitution of things, no friendships formed in

mature years are fraught with such an influence. Doubtless, numerous instances might be adduced of the devotedness of friends. Life itself has been cheerfully sacrificed for the objects of its love; but here is an influence which survives death. It is only amid the tender and susceptible feelings of childhood, such a tie is originated and fostered; and few better proofs present themselves of its beneficent design, than what is afforded by facts such as those to which I have adverted.

4th, *The relation of child and parent, secures for the world a self-denial and love, which it would not otherwise enjoy.*

Selfishness is the great sin. Even under the beneficent teaching of Christianity, how ready is selfishness to put its cold icy hand on every generous impulse. Take, in illustration, the bearing of society towards children. How much are we disposed to do for children not our own? Thousands of neglected little ones, helpless and hungry, swarm by night as by day, in the streets of all our great communities,—and, how are they cared for? Howled at and chased by the police as so many birds of prey to be scared by clamour, and treated as if their ignorance and vice denied them all claims upon our compassion; or if a sentiment of pity be awakened on beholding them, that is all. Who is there to welcome one of them to the bosom of his own well-cared for and well-clad family? And even when they are thought of, and cared for, how little at the best are we disposed to do for them compared with what we cheerfully do for our own! Here, then, is an arrangement by which selfishness is so far restrained; for in virtue of the relation between parent and child, a large portion of our race is cared for, and nurtured with a love and disinterestedness which are equal to their

need. The birth of a child often accomplishes a wonderful revolution in the mother's heart. From being a vain, worldly, frivolous, self-seeking woman, she becomes the unselfish guardian of one of the most helpless creatures whom God hath made. True, they are our own children to whom this kindly nurture is proffered, but they are not less God's creatures and needy beings. Thus it is, by the parental relation there is secured for the world a love, and self-denial, which greatly mitigates the sufferings of a fallen state.

Nor are children the only recipients of the kindness thus engendered. "It is easy to observe," says Bishop Hall, "that none are so gripple and hard-fisted as the childless; whereas those who, for the maintenance of large families, are inured to frequent disbursements, find such experience of Divine Providence in the faithful management of their affairs as that they lay out with more cheerfulness what they receive." And I would add, the care of children is of the character of the most enlarged benevolence. While it may in some instances circumscribe and concentrate the affections, and consequently all generous action, in general it tends to enlarge the heart, till it has comprehended the world in its embrace.

5th, *Not only is the heart by means of the family constitution disposed to beneficence,—a favourable sphere is provided for its exercise.*

Each sphere has its peculiarities. The world at large presents to all, opportunities of usefulness. Our immediate neighbourhood has not only its special claims, but its special advantages. The same may be said of Christian fellowship, and the sphere of our daily toil. But the family circle transcends them all. Here, as already remarked, the oppor-

tunity for good is not occasional, but uninterrupted. Every hour is to be an hour of beneficence—every word, and act, and look, the dictate of love—ever animated by the thought that we are to be good, that our children may be good. We cannot speak, or look, or act, without others being affected. The blow which strikes one is felt by all; the joy of one is the joy of all. Whoever are denied access to the young, parents are not. What, then, may not Christian beneficence accomplish on such a field!

Generous-hearted women are apt to think despondingly, that their sex and circumstances have debarred them from all effective participation in works of Christian usefulness. The truth is, theirs is a sphere to which no other can compare. "Woman," says Vinet, "is more powerful by influence than direct action, by example than argument, and often by silence rather than by speech. Confined within these limits, she is still the depositor and arbitrator of the greatest interests of human life. Arbitrators of our happiness and of a portion of our virtues, women stamp the seal of their character and manner on each new generation, since each generation during its earliest years belongs entirely to them. Whoever has reflected upon the energy and obstinate duration of our first impressions, whoever will remember that these first impressions are just those that a mother communicates or modifies, will not hesitate to allow that woman holds in her delicate hands, together with the character of the rising generation, the destinies of society." Here, then, is a field that may satisfy the longings of the most generous heart, and fully engage the energies of the earnest.

The family sphere, is the field for the performance of the highest of all works. What nobler aim can engage us than the salvation of others? the salvation of those who are "bone

of our bone, and flesh of our flesh?" All the instances in which the sick were brought to Christ, and two of those in which he raised the dead, were through the instrumentality of warm-hearted friends. And will not Christ be as forward to hear the prayers and second the efforts of such for spiritual good? You remember how, when he had delivered the Gadarene demoniac from his tormentors, he said, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee" (Mark v. 19). There was his first duty, and his first sphere for the discharge of it. Fathers and mothers, you are messengers from God to your households. Your flock is indeed less numerous than that of the minister, but you may have on that account a more perfect supervision over it. Why has God allowed you to occupy the station of parents but that you should be bound to fulfil its duties? Who shall care for your offspring if you do not? Thus home presents us with a field of usefulness ever accessible, in which we may labour with peculiar advantage. How often do we hear the apology of want of opportunity, for doing nothing! Here is a sphere little thought of, but most delightful and promising.

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Each sphere has its peculiarities. The world at large presents to all, opportunities of usefulness. Our immediate neighbourhood has not only its special claims, but its special advantages. The same may be said of Christian fellowship, and the sphere of our daily toil. But the family circle transcends them all. Here, as already remarked, the oppor-

tunity for good is not occasional, but uninterrupted. Every hour is to be an hour of beneficence—every word, and act, and look, the dictate of love—ever animated by the thought that we are to be good, that our children may be good. We cannot speak, or look, or act, without others being affected. The blow which strikes one is felt by all; the joy of one is the joy of all. Whoever are denied access to the young, parents are not. What, then, may not Christian beneficence accomplish on such a field!

Generous-hearted women are apt to think despondingly, that their sex and circumstances have debarred them from all effective participation in works of Christian usefulness. The truth is, theirs is a sphere to which no other can compare. "Woman," says Vinet, "is more powerful by influence than direct action, by example than argument, and often by silence rather than by speech. Confined within these limits, she is still the depositor and arbitrator of the greatest interests of human life. Arbitrators of our happiness and of a portion of our virtues, women stamp the seal of their character and manner on each new generation, since each generation during its earliest years belongs entirely to them. Whoever has reflected upon the energy and obstinate duration of our first impressions, whoever will remember that these first impressions are just those that a mother communicates or modifies, will not hesitate to allow that woman holds in her delicate hands, together with the character of the rising generation, the destinies of society." Here, then, is a field that may satisfy the longings of the most generous heart, and fully engage the energies of the earnest.

The family sphere, is the field for the performance of the highest of all works. What nobler aim can engage us than the salvation of others? the salvation of those who are "bone

of our bone, and flesh of our flesh?" All the instances in which the sick were brought to Christ, and two of those in which he raised the dead, were through the instrumentality of warm-hearted friends. And will not Christ be as forward to hear the prayers and second the efforts of such for spiritual good? You remember how, when he had delivered the Gadarene demoniac from his tormentors, he said, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee" (Mark v. 19). There was his first duty, and his first sphere for the discharge of it. Fathers and mothers, you are messengers from God to your households. Your flock is indeed less numerous than that of the minister, but you may have on that account a more perfect supervision over it. Why has God allowed you to occupy the station of parents but that you should be bound to fulfil its duties? Who shall care for your offspring if you do not? Thus home presents us with a field of usefulness ever accessible, in which we may labour with peculiar advantage. How often do we hear the apology of want of opportunity, for doing nothing! Here is a sphere little thought of, but most delightful and promising.

III.

THE INFLUENCE OF CHILDREN.

"Like the light which visits us every morning, so softly as not to disturb the sleeping infant, yet quickens all nature into life and beauty, so gently does this influence touch the very life-roots of our humanity, permeate our gentler emotional nature, educing the gentler graces of the spirit; an influence silent, yet vivifying as the glance of the sunbeam; noiseless, yet refreshing as the morning dew."—*Theophilus Stork, D.D.*

ALTHOUGH the influence of children pertains to the design of childhood, it is so important as to be worthy of separate illustration. The influence of children is felt in every home in the land—ay, felt by every member of the community. Why is it that statesmen deliberate and debate upon measures for repressing juvenile crime, and providing education for the young—deliberate and debate as if a foe were on our borders, threatening the destruction of our lives and our liberties? It is because of the influence of children—their influence for evil, if neglected—their influence for good, if trained to habits of virtue, and imbued with the principles of morality and religion.

1st, *There is their influence upon domestic happiness.*

Were I to ask for the sweetest scene on earth, I would doubtless be directed to some happy family circle. What joy so pure, what love so true, so deep and abiding! And

doubtless this felicity is in a large measure due to children. The heart was made to love. Of all the trials of ordinary life, one of the hardest is for a loving nature to find no object for its affection. True, there are multitudes around, but love, in its highest form is select, and discriminating; it is only, then, when we are bound to those who have by the tenderest ties bound themselves to us, that love is supreme. The domestic constitution, better than aught else, meets this want of our nature. The birth of a child, what a cause of joy! It awakens feelings unknown before. There is the unburdening of the father's heart, and the filling of it with new bliss. There is the opening up in that of the mother, a new well-spring of love. There is the gentle unfolding of the curtained cradle, and the smiling greeting of young and old; and there they peep and gaze, and lift the tiny hand in the admiring view of all, and extol the exquisite symmetry, as if such a thing of beauty had not been seen before. Never did stream take its rise in a lovelier nook. Most auspiciously does such a life begin. Nor does the future belie an inauguration so full of promise. What a fund of joyous emotion does every infant nature comprehend! No elaborate devices are needed to give it impulse. A collection of sticks or stones—a conglomeration of disabled and fantastic toys—a free use of parlour, kitchen, or nursery furniture, is sufficient to set it a bubbling and overflowing, like rills among the mountains, as they dance and sparkle in the summer sun. Now, such a well-spring of delight, in any domestic circle, cannot fail to make it happy. As it is the tendency of every object to assimilate all around to its own temperature, so it is the tendency of children to imbue others with their own joyousness. Sinful though a child be, there is about it the freshness of a Divine handiwork—its pure

and simple love, its ringing glee, its docility and dependence, make home the happiest spot on earth. Children throw around us the beauty and simplicity of our own early life, and, by means of fellowship with them, we perpetuate the joy of our own infant years.

"Ah! what would the world be to us,
If the children were no more?
We should dread the desert behind us,
Worse than the dark before.
What the leaves are to the forest,
With light and air for food,
Ere their sweet and tender juices
Have been hardened into wood,—
That to the world are children—
Through them it feels the glow
Of a brighter and sunnier climate
Than reaches the trunk below."

No wonder, then, if amid the din of daily toil, and even the allurements of public life, the father's heart is ever on the way home: and no wonder the poet, when describing the "Cottar's Saturday Night," should tell us:

"The lisping infant prattling on his knee
Does a' his weary carking cares beguile,
An' makes him quite forget his labour and his toil."

A brother in the ministry told me, that one Sabbath evening he called upon a gentleman, a member of his congregation, who had been unfortunate in business. To his surprise, he found him more cheerful than on previous visits, and on adverting to the fact, his friend replied, "I was sitting here brooding over my sad misfortune, when the door opened, and in rushed my little girl, direct from the Sunday school, singing—

"There is a happy land
Far, far away."

It was, sir, the best sermon I ever heard, and did me more good than all the words of comfort by which kind friends have sought to cheer me."

What wealth is to the rich man, children are to the poor. In nothing has God more strikingly manifested His goodness, than in the general distribution of that on which happiness most truly depends. If wealth and honour are the allotment of few, others are not necessarily miserable. The beauties of nature and the singing of birds, the zest of enterprise, and the enjoyment of a healthful exercise of mind and body, the genialities of friendship, and the felicities of domestic life, are as free to the poor as to the rich. "These are they that make rich men poor," said a great man, as he entered a house, and looked upon a numerous family. "Nay, my lord," was the father's reply, "these are they that make a poor man rich; for there is not one of these, whom we would part with for all your wealth." How many have prayed in the poet's words:

"O, fairies never leave us:
O, still breathe mortal breath:
O, not of one bereave us,
Thou fear, whose name is Death:
These human blooms, O let them
Live on to summer here;
And not till winter fret them
Bid them to disappear:
Lord, leave them to caress us,
Through good, through ill to come,
Still let these dear ones bless us,
These fairies of our home."

Even when death has taken from us "these fairies of our

home," they leave behind a memory fraught with bliss. Most touchingly and beautifully has Edward Irving given expression to this fact:

"Whoso studieth," says he, "as I have done, and reflecteth as I have sought to reflect, upon the first twelve months of a child; whoso hath had such a child to look and reflect upon, as the Lord for fifteen months did bless me withal (whom I would not recall, if a wish could recall him, from the enjoyment and service of our dear Lord), will rather marvel how the growth of that wonderful creature, which put forth such a glorious bud of being, should come to be so cloaked by the flesh, cramped by the world, and cut short by Satan, as not to become a winged seraph; will rather wonder that such a puny, heartless, feeble thing as manhood should be the abortive fruit of the rich bud of childhood, than think that childhood is an imperfect promise and opening of the future man. And therefore it is that I grudged not our noble, lovely child, but rather do delight that such a seed should blossom and bear in the kindly and kindred Paradise of my God. And why should not I speak of thee, my Edward! seeing it was in the season of thy sickness and death the Lord did reveal in me the knowledge and hope and desire of His Son from heaven? Glorious exchange! He took my son to His own more Fatherly bosom, and revealed in my bosom the sure expectation and faith of His own eternal Son! Dear season of my life! ever to be remembered, when I knew the sweetness and fruitfulness of such joy and sorrow."

Writing to Mrs Irving, and narrating his solitary journey homeward, over the moors, on foot, he says, "Here I waded the Yarrow at the foot of the loch, under the crescent moon, where, finding a convenient rock beneath some overhanging

branches which moaned and sighed in the breeze, I sat me down, while the wind, sweeping, brought the waters of the loch to my feet; and I paid my devotions to the Lord in His own ample and magnificent temple; and sweet meditations were afforded me of thee, our babe, and our departed boy. My soul was filled with sweetness. I did not ask for a sign, as Colonel Blackadder says; but when I looked up to the moon, as I came out from the ecclesia of the rock, she looked as never a moon had looked before in my eye,—as if she had been washed in dew, which, speedily clearing off, she looked so bright and beautiful; and on the summit of the opposite hill, *a little bright star gleamed upon me, like the bright, bright eye of our darling.* Oh! how I wished you had been with me to partake the sweet solacement of that moment!"*

2d, *How much, too, of the enterprise of life derives its power from the influence of children.*

That bustle and business upon 'Change—that toiling and sweating in workshops and factories—that hurrying to and fro, buying, selling, and getting gain—that deliberating in cabinets, and keen debating in senates—that marshalling of armies, and fiercer conflicts upon battle-fields, is mainly due to the little ones at home. It is related, that Alexander the Great, on being congratulated on the wide extension of his dominion, replied, "They call me the conqueror of the world: no, there he is," pointing to his little boy, busy amid his toys, "he rules his mamma, his mamma rules me, and I rule all men." What a world were this of ours, were it bereft of the children! Not only would life be divested of its poetry, it would be divested of much of its motive power.

* "The Life of Edward Irving." By Mrs Oliphant.

How often when the head of a family has been struck down by death, and, left apparently without resources, have we seen the mother heroically taking his place, and discovering an energy of which she was herself unconscious—devising new means of family support, and although alone to bear the burden of family cares, actually rising to a higher social position. Numerous instances of the kind have come under my observation, and they all afford proof of the influence of children upon the enterprise of life. I have indeed thought that were a new evidence of Christianity required, the instances of widows thus providing for fatherless families, might be adduced as a proof, that the God of the Bible is in very truth the husband of the widow; and that although no miraculous agency is employed for their provision, an agency as manifestly divine is employed in securing such results. The book which pledges God to the accomplishment of all this for the widow and the fatherless, is surely His own.

3d, *Children have often been the means of preserving their parents in virtue, and reclaiming them from vice.*

Daily and hourly, children preach to us; not merely from nursery pulpits do they preach to us. Their very innocence and simplicity inculcate the excellence of an unvitiated life. "Would to God I were a child again!" exclaimed a conscience-stricken profligate, as he caught to his bosom a little girl. Years have passed since I witnessed the incident, but there still bows before me the wretched man, clinging to the wondering little one. Moralists are these infant preachers, but they utter no stern reproaches, deliver no elaborate homilies; and yet they preach to us of innocence, humility, faith, and hope. If not so, why did

Jesus say, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. xviii. 3). Helpless although they be, they affect us by a light, as penetrating and powerful as the very light of day. We have read of a fisherman at sea during a dense fog, which rendered all his attempts to reach the land unavailing, and almost yielding to despair, when a little voice came through the darkness, "Steer straight to me, father." That call, "Steer straight to me, father," has often sounded in the ear of an erring parent. A working man, on a pay-night, was seen to turn aside from his wife, who carried an infant in her arms, but as he placed his foot on the threshold of a public-house, she held up the little one full in his view. She uttered no upbraiding, but the child crowed and laughed, as if it would lure him from the snare. He halted a moment, smiled, and taking his little one in his arms, pursued his way home. How truly was it predicted, "And a little child shall lead them."

But the influence of children has issued in more momentous results. A gentleman once rose in a religious conference, and laying his hand upon the head of a boy that sat by his side, said, "Here is my spiritual father." God generally accomplishes His purposes by means gentle and silent. Stout-hearted men, who have braved danger in every form, and whom even miracles might have left unconvinced, have in the hour of tenderness and susceptibility been led even by a child up to the Cross, on which there hangs the Lamb of God.

4th, *Children influence favourably the religious character of parents.*

Can we conceive of any event in life better fitted to

quicken a woman's piety, than is the birth of a child? Even if she never prayed before, she cannot surely restrain prayer now. Parents of the slightest reflection cannot but feel, that the destiny of that frail and susceptible creature committed to their charge, must be materially affected by their bearing towards it, and thus the possible conduct of the child favourably influences their own.

> "I have wept
> With gladness at the gift of this fair child.
> My life is bound up in hers. But, oh God!
> Thou know'st how heavily my heart at times
> Bears its sweet burthen; and if Thou hast given
> To nurture such as mine, this spotless flower,
> To bring it unpolluted unto Thee,
> Take Thou its love, I pray Thee; give it light.
> Leave not me
> To bring it to the gates of heaven alone."

This humbling of the soul in a sense of its conscious inadequacy—this bringing of the heart to God for help, is one of the holiest influences of domestic life.

Nor is this all. It exerts an influence of a more comprehensive kind. Soon the child grows and becomes the subject of discipline; but of discipline not only to the child, but to the parent too. There is the outburst of passion, disobedience, ignorance, petulance. And to meet this state of things, resolution, discretion, self-possession, are required. A rabble may invade a palace, and seizing on the insignia of royalty, toss a crown as if it were a bauble; but who shall wrest the sceptre from a parent's hand? Till he voluntarily abdicates the throne, he rules supreme. The truth is, our children do more for our education than we do for theirs.

A friend related to me an incident in his family history

which seems fraught with important suggestions. His eldest child gave early indications of an imperious will. On withdrawing for bed one night, the father solicited the parting kiss. It was refused, and solicited again, but more peremptorily denied. Upon which, he lifted the rebellious child, and, carrying her to her couch, kneeled over her, and implored that God would subdue her stubborn will. Ere he rose the prayer was answered. Kissing her father, she implored forgiveness; and from that day—now more than twenty years ago—that child has been the light and joy of a happy Christian home. Think you, was not that father, in the very prostration of his soul, made a holier and happier man?

5th, *Children influence even the great moral and religious movements of the day.*

That was a notable instance in point, when children greeted Christ in the temple. They had heard their mothers speak of the loving, miracle-working Jesus, and so when they meet Him, they catch the enthusiasm of the crowd by which He was accompanied, and shout "Hosanna to the Son of David." That shout sent dismay to the hearts of His foes. "Hearest thou what these say?" More ominous were their praises than even were the plaudits of the crowd. There was in their enthusiasm the prophecy of triumph. The crowd might change; but early convictions are the mainsprings of our life. The cause which enlists the young is sure. This is obvious; their simple greetings cheered the heart of the Man of sorrows in this the hour of the travail of His soul.

And often have the leaders of popular movements been cheered by the sympathy of children. It is narrated that

in one of the darkest hours of the Reformation, when Luther was nigh despairing, he heard some children praying for his success; he took heart again, and ever after was able to present to the enemy an unwavering front.

That is a touching illustration given by Professor Gausen of Geneva in the preface to "The World's Birthday." Addressing the children to whom he was wont to minister, he says: "I had scarcely recovered from the severe illness which had long kept me to bed, when a visit was announced. 'It is impossible,' replied I. Still I was persuaded to appear on the balcony of my room; and there you stood on the grass. I heard your hymns, and received your flowers; but what pleased me most was the packet of cards which you presented, on each your name, and a verse from the Word of God. This bunch of more than a hundred flowers, gathered in the garden of Scripture, brought to me a precious fragrance. I frequently read them. They revived and strengthened my soul. I send you in return the notes of these lessons." Thus one of the most delightful books of this charming writer, owes its existence to the influence of children.

What leader in social and religious movement—what philanthropist or preacher—has not felt that influence? It is right, then, that we recognise and duly estimate that which so powerfully affects the world's destiny for weal or woe.

Part Second.

INFANT GUILT AND DEPRAVITY.

WE ARE BORN DEPRAVED.

EARLY SINNING.

INFANT GUILT.

CONSEQUENCES OF A DENIAL OF THE DOCTRINE.

"We have sometimes thought that we saw the fittest emblem of man's fallen state in the ruins of an old church. Now deserted, now desecrated, defiled, what a change is there! Save in the ivy that, like pity, clings to the crumbling wall, sustaining and veiling its decay, and in some sweet wild-flower rooted in window-sill or gaping rent, beauty and life are gone. Yet there, once on a time, many a beautiful babe was baptized to God; there holy words were spoken, holy vows were taken, and holy communions held. There are eyes in glory that turn with interest to that lonely spot; God and man often met within these roofless walls. 'This and that man was born there.' But now the only sounds are the sighing of the wind or the roar of the storm—the hoot of the owl or the hiss of the serpent; nor life is found there now, but in the brood of the night-bird, which has its rest among the ruins above, or in the worms that fatten upon the dead in their cold graves below. 'The glory is departed.' And once a shrine of God, but now a deserted sanctuary, may we not write—'Ichabod,' on the heart? The ruin resounds with the echoes which the ear of fancy hears muttering among the desolate heaps of Babylon—'Fallen, fallen, fallen!'"

Thomas Guthrie, D.D.

I.

WE ARE BORN DEPRAVED.

"If the words which the Apostle uses here (Rom. iii. 10-19) do not most fully and determinately signify a universality, no words ever used in the Bible, or elsewhere, are sufficient to do it. I might challenge any man to produce any one paragraph in the Scripture, from the beginning to the end, where there is such a repetition and accumulation of terms, so strongly, and emphatically, and carefully to express the most perfect and absolute universality, or any place to be compared to it."—*Jonathan Edwards.*

NO believer in the Bible will deny the guilt and depravity of men and women. There are those, however, who accept the Bible as a revelation of God, and who yet deny infant guilt and depravity, or admit it in such a qualified sense as to divest it of all practical significance. We hear children spoken of as "little innocents," and of "the innocence and purity of early childhood." Doubtless children are characterised by much simplicity, docility, and attractiveness; and this allied with the absence of depravity in its more revolting forms, is apt to mislead us as to their true character and condition. Amiable qualities, it ought to be remembered, are not holiness. The young ruler who came to Christ, inquiring "What good thing shall

I do, that I may have eternal life?" had much which commended him to Christ; yet his virtue failed when tested by his duty to the poor. We may place the monumental dove of pure white marble over the graves of the young, as emblematic of their innocence, or scatter flowers there, as emblems of their sweetness; but the disfigured form beneath, proclaims more eloquently than either, the doctrine of innate depravity.

The universal depravity of our race, and, consequently, the depravity of infants, has been held by almost all the great theological writers, and with remarkable uniformity embodied in the Church's creeds and confessions. The early fathers held it, the reformers held it, Arminians and Calvinists held it; indeed, it has ever been the unanimous opinion of expositors and theologians, that every child is born in a state of moral pollution. And yet it is to be feared, that what is admitted to be theologically true, is practically denied. Children are neither viewed nor dealt with as corrupt and depraved. It is not, then, the proof that men and women are sinners, which I require to adduce, but the proof that infants are sinners, or, in other words, that every human being is born in a state of guilt and depravity. The texts which teach the universality of human sinfulness, are doubtless more numerous, than those which teach the doctrine in question; and for this reason, that having asserted that the race is corrupt, it was less necessary to assert that a portion of it is so.

Let us look then at the Scripture proof of the doctrine. "Who," asks Job, "can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one;" and again, "What is man that he should be clean? and he that is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?" We also read, "the wicked are

estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies;" "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." David having confessed the great sin of his life, traces it up to the corruption of his nature: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Job xiv. 4, xv. 14; Ps. lviii. 3; Gen. viii. 21; Ps. li. 5.)

Calvin in commenting upon the last text quoted, says, "Now he does not confess himself guilty merely of some one or more sins, as formerly, but he rises higher—that from his mother's womb he has brought forth nothing but sin, and by nature is wholly corrupted, and, as it were, immersed in sin;" and Hengstenberg says, that the doctrine of original sin is so plainly taught here, "that nothing but the most confused mind can deny it. For when David confesses, that even before the development of his consciousness, before the time of his distinguishing between good and evil, that even at his birth, nay, at his very conception, sin dwelt in him, and had so poisoned his nature, that he was quite incapable of attaining to true righteousness and wisdom; he places himself in direct collision with those who consider sin merely as a product of the abused freedom of each individual, and leaves room for no other derivation of sinfulness, than this, that it goes down from parents to their children, according to the word, 'what is born of the flesh is flesh.'"

Look a moment at the text just quoted, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John iii. 6). That by flesh we are to understand corrupt human nature is obvious (Rom. vii. 5, 18; Gal. v. 16). To regard the text as simply teaching, "The offspring of a human being is a human being," would be absurd. It is of the necessity of regeneration our Lord

is speaking, and what He teaches evidently is, that that which is born of corrupt nature is corrupt, for He immediately adds, "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Thus He traces both sin and holiness to their respective sources, or, as Jonathan Edwards expresses it, "His speech implies, that what is born in the first birth of man, is nothing but man as he is in himself, without anything divine in him; depraved, debased, sinful, ruined man, utterly unfit to enter into the kingdom of God. But that which is born in the new birth, of the Spirit of God, is a spiritual principle, a holy and divine nature, meet for the heavenly kingdom."

In accordance with this, Paul declares, "We were by nature the children of wrath even as others" (Eph. ii. 3). Scholars of acknowledged authority tell us, that by *nature* we are to understand, what is natural or innate, birth, origin, nativity, in opposition to what is superinduced or acquired. The apostle then affirms that we were born corrupt, and obnoxious to the wrath of God, that the human soul has in it from its very origin the germ of sin; we did not become guilty and depraved, but were born guilty and depraved. When, however, it is said, that man is naturally depraved, the meaning is not, that depravity pertains to the original constitution of his nature, for he was created "in righteousness and true holiness," but that the nature is depraved, in which he is born, under a fallen condition.

That other class of texts which require parents to subject their children to a holy discipline, imply the fact of their depravity. Why the injunction, "He that spareth the rod, hateth the child," if children are naturally submissive to authority? Why the injunction, "Train up a child in the way he should go," if he is naturally disposed to go in that way? Why the injunction, "Bring them up in the nurture

and admonition of the Lord," if growth in holiness is spontaneous?

This view is corroborated by the fact, that Jesus is spoken of as a holy child. The angel announced to Mary "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." He was also called the "holy child Jesus" (Luke i. 35; Acts iv. 27). Never did Scripture so designate any other child. The birth of Samuel, of the child of the Shunammite woman, of John the Baptist, were all predicted, but never was any of them predicted as *holy*. Now, why this speciality in the case of Christ, if all children are born without sin? Only is there significance in it, on the supposition, that all others are born depraved. Who can believe that the infant Judas was born pure and holy as was the infant Jesus?

Scripture then evidently teaches, that sinful parents can only have a sinful offspring. But how, it has been asked, is this view consistent with what our Lord said, when He took the child and set him in the midst of His disciples, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii. 2, 3)? The words of Bellamy may be quoted as an apt reply. "Where," says he, "was the propriety of those words in Isa. liii. 7, when the prophet speaking of Christ's meekness and patience under his sufferings, says, "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth?" Is it not here supposed that sheep are patterns of meekness and patience? The truth is, that these allusions do not prove that either sheep or little children naturally have any real humility or meekness of a gracious nature, but only an appearance of it; and just of the same nature are those phrases, "as wise as serpents, as harmless as doves." But as these Scriptures

do not prove that sheep, and serpents, and doves, have grace, so neither does that other text prove that little children naturally have it." When Jesus uttered the words in question, he had reference to the disposition, the docility and teachableness of children, and not to their moral and spiritual condition. If it is implied in the text adduced that children are sinless, then it must mean that till we are sinless, we cannot be the subjects of His kingdom—a doctrine which is nowhere taught in Scripture.

We cannot tell how a vitiated moral disposition should beget a like vitiated disposition, but of the fact Scripture assures us, and all experience and observation confirm its testimony. As certainly as wolves beget wolves do sinners beget sinners. From one generation to another the poisonous stream flows down. "Original sin," says Calvin, "appears to be an hereditary pravity and corruption of our nature, diffused through all the parts of the soul. We derive from Adam, not only the punishment, but also the pollution to which the punishment is justly due."

While there has been a remarkable unanimity amongst theologians, as to the fact of human depravity, and that that depravity is in consequence of our descent from Adam, there has been no small diversity of opinion as to the question, whether this depraved tendency has in it, as subsisting in the nature of the new born child, anything positive; or whether it be merely privative, as in the physical world, darkness is simply the absence of light; whether it consists in principles and affections which in themselves are directly and absolutely evil, or whether it be no more than the privation or absence of such as are good. We do not, however, deem it necessary to enter into the question as to the

transmission of moral evil.* "It is much more our duty and interest," says Boston, "to be solicitous how to get sin out of our souls, than to pry and search into the way how it came into them."

We cannot, however, accept the opinion that we are born with no bias of any kind, that the human heart is like a sheet of paper on which nothing is written, but upon which anything may be written. Dr Wardlaw has acutely remarked, "It will be a juster comparison, if we liken the mind to a sheet of paper on which have been written characters in sympathetic ink, which are not discernible by the eye, till, by approximation to the fire, they are brought out into legible distinctness. So is it with the principles of evil in infancy. We may not, for a time, be sensible of their presence; and may be delighted with the smiling harmlessness of the little babe. But the principles are there; and require only the influence of circumstances to bring them into practical and visible manifestation—a manifestation which, to even the eye of a superficial observer, commences at a very early period."† And not only so, but depravity operates with all the spontaneity of a natural affection. Even without the stimulus of temptation or example, it will manifest itself. Could we then have more conclusive evidence that our very nature is depraved? Some hold, that as children are incapable of intelligent acts for some time after birth, it cannot be affirmed that they are born sinners; but just as we may affirm of any beast of prey, that its nature is vicious, even before it has perpetrated a single act of violence, or

* *See* Edwards on "Original Sin;" Russell on the "Two Dispensations;" Anderson on "Regeneration;" Payne's "Congregational Lecture;" and Wardlaw's Theology, vol. ii.

† Wardlaw's "Christian Ethics."

that the nature of a nettle is to sting, although as yet no one has been stung by it; so may we affirm that children are depraved, before they have actually sinned. Sin in an unconscious infant, it is admitted, cannot be one and the same as sin in a full-grown man, for the reason, infants have not voluntarily transgressed the law of God. An infant may be said to have sinned, but "not after the similitude of Adam's transgression." In the one there is developed, and in the other undeveloped evil; but both are sinners. It may be regarded, then, as a point settled beyond dispute, that from the first moment of our personal existence we are sinners, and that there is no existence in this life apart from sin.

II.

EARLY SINNING.

"If we wish to teach you the degeneracy of man, to prove that he is by nature altogether alienated from righteousness, we do not send you into the midst of the struggle and din of our cities—we do not bid you observe the maturity of crime, the spectacle of full-grown and unrestrained wickedness; we send you to our nurseries, where, if human nature is to be observed at all, it may be observed before there have been brought to bear on it much of external influence, and before its disposition can have been altered whether for good or bad, and we are quite sure that no unprejudiced party can be proof against the evidences that our nurseries can give."—*Melvill.*

THE doctrine of innate depravity, is confirmed by the fact, that the first moral exercises of a child are sinful. We may fix our eyes upon any infant, and predict with certainty, that as soon as it is capable of any exercise, moral or intellectual, it will manifest a depraved nature. How soon do pride, selfishness, falsehood, disobedience, cruelty, discover themselves! How soon are parental admonition and correction called for! "I have," says Dr Dwight, "been employed in the education of children and youth more than thirty years, and have watched their conduct with no small attention and anxiety. Yet among the thousands of children committed to my care, I cannot say with truth that I have seen one whose native character I had any reason to believe to be virtuous, or

whom I could conscientiously pronounce to be free from evil affections, and evil conduct, rebellion, disobedience, unkindness, wrath, revenge, pride, ambition, vanity, selfishness. All of them were destitute of piety to God. They neither loved, feared, nor obeyed Him." And a similar testimony might be obtained from every parent, and instructor of youth. Now this sinfulness cannot be ascribed to any previous change of disposition, for it is among the first manifestations of disposition of any kind. Nor can it be ascribed to any unfavourable circumstance, such as evil example, or strong temptation; for even where example is good, and temptation is not presented, depraved propensities will manifest themselves. Children will utter falsehoods without ever having heard a lie—they will torture insects, and take delight in their sufferings, without ever having witnessed an instance of such cruelty—they will steal without ever having seen an instance of theft—they will disobey parents without ever having witnessed such disobedience; they will, in short, exhibit the same evil passions, the same unholy temper, the same petty rivalry, selfishness, envying, moroseness, anger, which in mature life are witnessed in general society, and which go to make men terrible to their fellow-men, which subject the criminal to public rebuke, and the infliction of punishment. Not that their depravity exhibits the same proportions as that of men and women, but that, in proportion to their years, it is as repulsive and as opposed to the holiness of the Divine law. Why, even young children have been swearers, thieves, drunkards, murderers!

What evidence then of a more conclusive character is required to prove the depravity of every child of Adam? If all the members of a family or tribe, on reaching a certain

age, died of a particular disease, would we not affirm that they were constitutionally predisposed to that disease? So, when all the members of the human race, without exception, on reaching a certain age, do wrong, can we resist the conclusion, that in our very nature there is a predisposition to wrong-doing? It is not a sufficient explanation to affirm that we are born free agents. If there was not in us a bias to sin, how is it, that we invariably incline to sin? Or, if a tree invariably bore bad fruit, whatever was the soil in which it was planted, or the favourable influences to which it was subjected, would we not pronounce it inherently corrupt? Or, as Dr Dick puts it, "If we found that, in every trial, one of the scales in a balance descended, we should conclude that it was heavier than the other; and can we draw any other conclusion in respect to the will, on observing how regularly it decides in favour of evil? It has chosen evil among Jews, Gentiles, Mahometans, and Christians; it chooses it in Europe, Africa, Asia, and America. This is not the work of chance. It is the result of a previous bias. The will is inclined to evil, and therefore human nature is depraved." If then anything in human nature manifests itself very early—if it under all circumstances discovers itself with the first dawn of intelligence, and the first exercises of will, we justly regard it as characteristic of the race.

Were the race not universally corrupt, we should, on the contrary, expect to see instances of infant holiness, as in the case of the child Jesus. True, instances do occasionally present themselves of infant holiness; to the charm of childhood is added the sweeter charm of early piety; but in every such case, the holiness can be traced to a special bestowal of the grace of God; and hence, instead of proving the

native purity of our nature, they afford confirmation of the doctrine for which we are contending.

Who is not conscious that he is possessed of an evil nature—a nature not made evil through intercourse with the depraved, but innate, which was

> " Cast and mingled with our very frame
> Grew with our growth, and strengthened with our strength ? "

Or, as good Bishop Beveridge expresses it, " Though there be no such word as original sin, to be found in Scripture, yet we have all too sad experience that there is such a thing as original sin to be found in our hearts."

III.

INFANT GUILT.

"The meaning is not, that the deed of one becomes by some process the deed of another, a thing quite impossible: but that the latter, in consequence of a legal connection with the former, is treated in law, as *though* it were His, inasmuch as He sustains the loss incurred, or the benefit procured by it. Such is the Scripture doctrine of imputation, when the reference is not to the actual doer of a thing, but to those who are treated as one in law with Him."—*David Russell, D.D.*

THE doctrine of infant guilt and depravity is declared by the Apostle in a memorable passage in the fifth chapter of Romans. There we read: "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. v. 12). Again we are told: "In Adam all die" (1 Cor. xv. 22). Once more we read: "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. vi. 23). If then children suffer the penalty of sin, is it not a just inference that they are sinners? Nor is the federal relation of infants to Adam a mere inference; it is directly asserted, in the declaration, that while they die, they have "not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression" (Rom. v. 14). Paul is not one of those who affirm that they are not sinners at all, but that while they are sinners they have not sinned as Adam did. Still their relation to Adam is such, as to constitute them from the first stage of existence, sinners; and accordingly

they are treated as such. It is a law of the Divine government that sin and death are inseparable. On the very threshold of life, then, they are confronted with the penalty of sin, which is death, and sooner or later they must suffer it. Had no Saviour been provided, the whole race must have perished, and as that race with the exception of the original pair, were destined to be born infants, it must be a righteous thing in God to send even infants to hell. This is obvious. If they are saved, it must be of grace and through the mediation of Christ; but if they enter heaven by grace, it is plain they might have been consigned to hell by justice. Nay, if no Saviour had been provided, it would have been merciful to have cut them off in infancy, rather than permit them to entail a heavier doom by years of actual transgression. Now, the explanation of this is, that they stand federally related to Adam. In the passage already adverted to (Rom. v. 12-19), we have Christ and Adam contrasted and compared. Each is a representative man. We die in Adam and live in Christ. As Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, or rendered to our account, so is Adam's sin imputed to us, or rendered to our account; not that Adam's sin becomes ours in such a sense that we could repent of it, any more than that Christ's righteousness becomes ours in such a sense that we could have complacency in it, as in that which was personally our own. No sinful act of one person can ever become the sinful act of another. Sin and holiness are personal qualities, and can by no possibility be transferred from one to another. But as we are justified on the ground of Christ's righteousness, so are we condemned on the ground of Adam's sin. If we reject the federal headship of Adam, to be consistent, we must reject also the federal headship of Christ. They stand

or fall together. Nor can we see any just cause to complain of such a constitution. God had as much right to make Adam the federal representative of His posterity, as He had to make Christ the federal representative of His people. Had Adam maintained his integrity, and all the blessings of his obedience become ours, who would have called his representative character in question? It cannot therefore be condemned or repudiated because he has failed.

But, say the opponents of this doctrine, shall the innocent bear the punishment of the guilty? We might appeal, in reply, to facts. Nothing is more common than the innocent suffering for the guilty. Is the drunkard, the forger, or the murderer the sole sufferer for his crime? The children of a traitor suffer for their father's crime. Does not God visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him? Did Achan alone suffer for his sin? Did not the leprosy of Gehazi descend to his children? Were not the first-born of Egypt involved in the guilt of their parents? (Exod. xx. 5; Josh. vii. 1-21; 2 Kings v. 27; Exod. xii. 29). What is the explanation of all the suffering which afflicts the world? Adam sinned. But for his sin, Eden's bliss would still have been ours, and the race would not be staggering on to the judgment-seat under an ever-increasing burden of guilt and gloom.

But are infants really the innocent beings some allege? If the representations already given be well founded, they are depraved; and because of their depravity, they may be righteously exposed to the wrath and curse of God. Certainly a being depraved, and which, so soon as it is able, is sure to be found among the violators of God's law, cannot with propriety be regarded as innocent.

IV.

CONSEQUENCE OF A DENIAL OF THE DOCTRINE.

"Christ came to seek and to save the lost. He was announced as the Saviour of sinners. His advent and work have no meaning or value but upon the assumption that we are guilty, for He came to save His people from their sins—to die the just for the unjust. Those who have no sin, need no Saviour; those who do not deserve death, need no Redeemer."—*Charles Hodge, D.D.*

IT is a perfectly legitimate mode of argument to show what must be the consequence of a denial of what is contended for. What then follows a denial of the doctrine of infant depravity?

1st, *It necessarily results from such a denial, that infants have no place in the covenant made with Adam.*

If they suffer neither for their own sin, nor for Adam's sin, they must suffer as the inferior animals. Scripture ascribes all suffering either to imputation or to personal demerit. If, then, children suffer, but not for Adam's sin, as represented by Paul in his Epistle to the Romans (v. 12-19), or for their own demerit, how shall we account for their sufferings? The theory for which we contend removes all difficulties. The theory in question is repugnant to our feelings, and opposed to the Word of God. In all the covenants into which God has entered with man, children have had a

place. Why, then, not here? Did not Adam stand as federal head of all his descendants? Why, then, exclude children from the number? Nay, if a covenant was made with Adam at all, on behalf of himself and his posterity, it had undoubtedly respect to children, as his posterity were in the first instance children. To deny, then, that they had a part in it, is to deny the Adamic dispensation altogether.

2d, *If infants are neither guilty nor depraved, they are necessarily excluded from participating in the work of Christ.*

Jesus is uniformly represented as coming to seek and to save the lost; if, then, children are sinless, the term cannot apply to them, and consequently Jesus is not their Saviour. But how does this comport with the singular interest He took in them, and his declaration respecting them—"Of such is the kingdom of heaven?" He, too, is represented as "the way" (John xiv. 6); if, then, children get to heaven, how do they get there? and if they join in its songs, if born sinless, they at least cannot sing "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood." What are the blessings of Christ's salvation? Pardon, acceptance, reconciliation, sanctification; but if those who die in infancy are sinless, they can obtain through Him none of these.

Now, are we prepared to avow that children have no participation in the work of Christ? But if they have, then are they guilty and depraved, for Christ's mediation respects only those who are such.

3d, *Equally evident is it, if they are not depraved, they have no part in the work of the Spirit.*

"We are not to suppose," says Dr Morison, "that there

is any sin in the soul of an infant at the moment of its birth, for, as the soul comes immediately from the hand of God, there cannot be sin in it till it voluntarily trangresses the law of God;" and in proof of this view, he quotes, "Sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John iii. 4), and remarks, "there cannot be sin in the souls of those infants who are not able to keep, or to transgress, or even to understand the law, and upon whom, consequently, it is not in their infancy binding." * Such a theory we cannot accept. Even those who hold, that original depravity is a privation rather than a pollution of nature, admit that children are in some sense born sinners. The fact that from the first moment of existence we need the Holy Spirit to fit us for the kingdom of God, seems conclusive upon the point. If men are born sinless, it must follow that between the time of birth and the commission of actual sin, they do not require regeneration. One of the grand ends of regeneration is a renewal of our nature, so that the propensity to sin gives place to the love and practice of holiness; but if infants have no such propensity, the operation of the Spirit in their case is needless. Can we, however, believe there is nothing the Spirit can do for infants? If so, on what principle are they baptized? Is not baptism a sign of regeneration? But if children are sinless, it is in their case a meaningless rite. "Why are they baptized for the remission of sin, if they have none?" was the triumphant interrogation of Augustine to Pelagius. If, then, the soul of a child is a fit subject for the Spirit's operation, it must be polluted, and that constitutes it a sinner, although it is not such by actual transgression.

* "Gospel Catechism"—in many respects a most admirable compendium of Gospel truth.

This subject is obviously of great practical importance. According to our view of the spiritual state and condition of children, will be our view of Christ's work in relation to them. If we regard them as plunged into the same ruin as ourselves, we shall prize the riches of that grace which reaches a depth so profound, and be diligent in the use of those means by which those so precious to us may fully enjoy its benefits. What hope can we have of our children but through Christ? How then should we adore His love, and seek His mercy on their behalf.

The practical influence of this doctrine is great, not only upon the education of the young, but upon our own personal piety. If the doctrine, as we have represented it, be discarded, and evil dispositions in the young be regarded as solely an effect of temptation or vicious example, there will be a reliance upon education, and the example of the virtuous, for the formation of a virtuous character, and an undervaluing, if not an entire rejection of God's method of restoration. On the other hand, if depravity be regarded as pertaining to our very nature, as inwrought with our moral constitution, and as too radical to be overcome by any mere domestic or educational nurture, our dependence for recovery is more likely to beget in our own minds deep convictions of sin, and great joy and peace in believing—delight in the public worship of God, in religious conference and prayer. Viewing myself as by nature a child of wrath, I shall exalt that grace which is adequate to my salvation. And when I come to consider, that this utter ruin comes upon me and mine, through the offence of my great federal head, I shall bow in submission to Him whose judgments are unsearchable, and whose ways are past finding out. Mysterious as is the doctrine of the Adamic consti-

tution, there is enough in the Divine procedure plain to assure me, that God is holy in all His ways, and righteous in all His works. Others may perplex themselves with the question, why hath He made me thus? but enough for me to know that "He is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working:" that sin to Him is no mystery; its entrance no unlooked-for emergency. Viewing the doctrine of human depravity thus, I shall regard it as no mere questionable theory, but as an awful fact, and reflecting that it is so, not only with me, but with all men, I shall see how helpless is the race, and how entirely salvation is of God. The doctrine, therefore, of innate, universal depravity tends, as it has been said, to exalt God, to humble man, and to make the Saviour precious. "As for the orthodoxy of the Church," says Dr Hitchcock, "without despising or disparaging the office of scientific theology, we may yet trust more to grace than to logic in our endeavours to hold men to the profounder and sterner teachings of the Bible. When we come to see ourselves as we are, apostatized from God, in desperate love with sin, and in peril of perishing forever, there is little danger but we shall be orthodox enough. We shall feel ourselves to be in need of an eternal purpose of redemption, in need of an infinite Saviour, in need of an almighty grace; and this need of an eternal purpose, this need of an infinite Saviour, this need of an almighty grace, shall be their triumphant demonstration."

Part Third.

BAPTISM.

ITS IMPORT.

CHILDREN ITS SUBJECTS.

THE MODE OF ADMINISTRATION.

" She stood up in the meekness of a heart
Resting on God, and held her fair young child
Upon her bosom, with its gentle eyes
Folded in sleep, as if its soul had gone
To whisper the baptismal vow in Heaven.
The prayer went up devoutly, and the lips
Of the good man glow'd fervently with faith
That it would be even as he had pray'd;
And the sweet child be gather'd to the fold
Of Jesus. As the holy words went on,
Her lips moved silently, and tears, fast tears,
Stole from beneath her lashes, and upon
The forehead of the beautiful child lay soft
With the baptismal water. Then I thought
That to the eye of God that mother's tears
Would be a deeper covenant—which sin
And the temptations of the world, and death
Would leave unbroken—and that she would know
In the clear light of heaven, how very strong
The prayer which press'd them from her heart had been
In leading its young spirit up to God."

Willis.

I.

IMPORT OF BAPTISM.

"Baptism is a sacrament wherein the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's."—*Westminster Catechism.*

BAPTISM was practised before Christ's day, but He gave to it a significance and application altogether new. Even His own disciples baptized many previous to His death, and, as we may presume, by His instructions (John iii. 22; iv. 1, 2); but it was in that remarkable interval between His resurrection and ascension, and during which He instructed them in "things pertaining to the kingdom of God," that He formally instituted baptism as a Christian ordinance. On a mountain of Galilee He had met the eleven according to appointment. With mingled feelings they beheld Him. A mystery to them before, He was now to them more a mystery than ever; and while some worshipped Him and others doubted, He uttered the words of the great commission—"Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"

(Matt. xxviii. 16, 19; Mark xvi. 15, 16). Thus the ordinance stands identified with the very introduction of Christianity. The institution of the supper immediately precedes the work of atonement which it chiefly symbolises; and the institution of baptism immediately precedès the outpouring of the Spirit, to whose work it chiefly relates.

What then is its import?

1st, *In baptism we make a visible profession of Christianity.*

We are baptized *in* or into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. To be baptized into any one, is publicly to acknowledge him as a religious teacher. Thus the Jews were baptized unto Moses (1 Cor. x. 2); that is, they professed belief in the system which he taught. and acknowledged him as their lawgiver and teacher. That it was the practice to baptize one who professed adhesion to teachers of a new doctrine or system of belief, is evident from the question proposed to John the Baptist—"Why baptizest thou then if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?" and from Paul's question—"Were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" (John i. 25; 1 Cor. i. 13). In Christian baptism, then, we profess to receive each of the persons of the Godhead, in their several offices, for the salvation of men; and engage to live and act as becomes such a profession. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. iii. 27). That is, they had put on the livery of Christ, and by their lives and conduct were known as His disciples. It does not appear that the Apostles baptized indiscriminately all who sought the rite at their hands. Their commission really meant, "Go ye and make disciples or Christians of all nations; baptising them when they become my disciples, in the name

of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." That the Apostles read their commission thus, is evident from their practice. Lydia, the Ethiopian eunuch, the jailor, Cornelius, the three thousand Pentecostal converts, all believed before they were baptized. Consequently Dr Halley is wrong when in his work on the Sacraments he says, "Jesus made and baptized disciples in the sense of learners, not converts." The assertion is disproved by the fact, that there is not an instance of adult baptism recorded in the New Testament, apart from faith in the person baptized.

Some are disposed to regard baptism solely as a household ordinance. It was no doubt in the first age administered in the dwellings of new converts; but this was owing to the circumstances in which the Church was then placed. Then there were no chapels or halls available for public Christian worship, nor might the congregations be so large as to require them. Justin Martyr, who is the first among the early writers to describe this ordinance, distinctly intimates that it was administered publicly. Not till the third century did it become one of the secret mysteries of the Church.

And when we present our children for baptism, we make a like profession. Invariably it signifies the entrance of the subjects of it into the Church. Who does not feel that to receive baptism for himself or for his child, and yet not to believe in Christ and His doctrines, would be a mockery? Infants are no doubt incapable of faith, but a father, by his own hand, may legally sign a bond which binds not himself, but his children. With the same propriety, but with greater solemnity and significance, can he enter into the obligations of Christian baptism, and say with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

2d, *Baptism is symbolical of Gospel truths.*

The first grand truth symbolised in baptism is *that we are sinful.* The emblematic significance of baptism is to be found in the purifying nature of the element used in it—in the cleansing virtue of water. If children are not sinful, why baptize them? why cleanse that which is not defiled? When an adult person submits to baptism, he professes his consciousness of moral pollution, and his desire to be made holy; and when a parent presents his child for baptism, he professes his belief that it is depraved, and needs renewal.

Baptism meets this state of moral corruption, as *it is symbolical of regeneration.* Water is everywhere used for the purpose of cleansing, and hence it is a divinely-chosen emblem of purification. Those rendered ceremonially unclean by contact with the dead, were purified by being sprinkled with water (Numb. xix.); and upon the great day of atonement, the high priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice upon the mercy-seat (Lev. iv. 17). Thus to a Jew the idea of purification, suggested by water, was familiar. The significance of the ordinance would seem to be expressed in the words—"Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish." Here prominence is given to baptism as a symbol, and means—baptism represents the efficacy of Christ's blood and Spirit. The promise of God was: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean." We read, too, of "the washing of regeneration." "Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins," said Peter, "and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy

Ghost." (Eph. v. 25–27; Ezek. xxxvi. 25; Titus iii. 5; Acts ii. 38).

Baptism is also *symbolical of pardon.* "Arise and be baptized," said Ananias to Paul, "and wash away thy sins." Not that baptism does literally wash away sin, but that it is the token of God's willingness to forgive, or the sign that He has forgiven. If baptism really cleansed the soul, then it would not be an emblem, but a reality. It accords with the usage of speech to speak of a symbol as that which it represents. Hence, said Jesus, in instituting the ordinance of the Supper, "This is My body." Not that the bread used in the service, is literally the body of Christ, but simply the representation of it.

Baptism is also symbolical of Christian union. Believers are said to be "baptized into one body" (1 Cor. xii. 13). That is, by baptism they are constituted one body. Nor does it merely symbolise the union of the Church, it symbolises union with Christ. Hence, our catechism teaches, that it "doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace."

3d, *It is common to speak of baptism as a seal of the covenant of grace.*

And believing, as we do, that it has come in the room of circumcision, there is propriety in so regarding it. The apostle, in speaking of Abraham, says: "He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith" (Rom. iv. 11). God's covenant with Abraham and his offspring was that He would be their God, and circumcision was the seal which He affixed to it. While it sealed adults as the people of God, it bound them to their duties as His worshippers, and pledged Him to be all to them that the

relation implied. *Sealing* deeds or covenants, appears from Scripture to have been generally practised (Neh. ix. 38; Jer. xxxii. 9, 10; 1 Kings xxi. 8; Esther iii. 12; Dan. xii. 9). As men, then, ratify their deeds by seal and signature, God gives us the guarantee of a similar procedure. Baptism, let it be observed in the case of an infant, is not a seal of a covenant between God and the infant, for a covenant implies a contract between parties capable of intelligent action; but baptism in such a case is the seal of a covenant between God and the parents, respecting the child. God has often thus attested his engagements to His people. The tree of life was the seal of His covenant with Adam; the rainbow was to Noah the pledge that he might sow and reap, in perfect assurance that the waters of the deluge were forever assuaged; circumcision was to Abraham the seal, that all people should be blessed in him; the pot of manna was the pledge of Divine provision in the wilderness; and the mysterious pillar of cloud and fire, the pledge that He would go with His people, and give them rest. And so, in like manner, baptism pledges Him to bestow all upon His people, which He has provided for them in Christ. This view of the ordinance is confirmed by the fact, that in baptism we are passive. In the supper we are active. We eat and drink. But we do not baptize ourselves. We are baptized. We do not seal ourselves. We are sealed. And shall we lightly esteem the ordinance thus viewed? We may in our desponding moments think that God has forgotten to be gracious, but every time baptism is dispensed, all such fears are proclaimed to be groundless. In this ordinance, God seems to say—Have I not pledged myself to do for you and yours all that is needful to the perfecting of salvation? Have I not signed

and sealed the covenant? Here to-day I take you to witness that I renew my promise. I have "confirmed my promise by an oath." And thus, from Sabbath to Sabbath, for the establishment of your faith, I renew my pledge, that I am to my people all that I ever promised to be.

4th, *Consider the efficacy of baptism.*

While such as the Quakers and Socinians deny the obligation of baptism altogether, others contend for it as equivalent to regeneration. The idea of baptismal regeneration, prevails not only among the illiterate and educated of the Church of England, but among the less instructed of all churches. How great is the anxiety of many parents to have their dying children baptized—in certain parts of the north of Scotland, thousands seek baptism for their children, who never partake of the sacramental supper; even in the most rigidly orthodox of our Presbyterian churches, it is common to speak of it as a *Christening.* The late Edward Irving, in his ten "Homilies on Baptism," propounds a modified theory of baptismal regeneration, contending that baptism is "not a sign, but the thing signified also—not a shell, but a shell with its kernel in it."

It does not consist with the limits of the present work to enter upon an examination of the texts upon which the doctrine of baptismal regeneration is founded.* It may suffice to advert to a few facts, which are easily apprehended, and which prove conclusively, the unscripturalness of the doctrine in question. Simon Magus, although baptized by apostolic hands, remained "in the gall

* Any one desirous of studying these texts, will find valuable aid in "The Pædobaptist's Guide," a most admirable and scholarly little work by the Rev. John Guthrie, M.A., Glasgow.

of bitterness and bond of iniquity" (Acts viii. 13–23); and thousands baptized by priestly hands, live in the grossest sin, and die, without having afforded a single token of a change of heart. On the contrary, the penitent thief entered heaven without baptism. The Bible asserts that we must be regenerated before we enter heaven, but it nowhere asserts we must be baptized before we enter heaven. While it is declared he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, it is nowhere declared, he that is not baptized shall be lost, but "he that believeth not shall be damned." Our salvation, according to Scripture, depends not upon baptism, but upon faith and regeneration. "In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature, and faith that worketh by love;" and what is true of circumcision is equally true of baptism. Not an instance, as I have already remarked, of adult baptism can be adduced from the New Testament, apart from the faith of the party baptized. Paul, Lydia, the Ethiopian eunuch, the Philippian jailor, and the three thousand converts on the day of Pentecost, were all believers, and consequently regenerated before they were baptized: hence it follows that to ascribe regeneration to baptism is gross delusion. If it were true that baptismal water cleansed the soul, why did Paul thank God he had baptized so few? Were regeneration the effect of baptism, the great work of the Gospel ministry would not be the preaching of the Word, but the administration of this ordinance (1. Cor. i. 14, 17).

What then is the use or efficacy of baptism? It is reasonable to suppose that being an ordinance of Divine appointment, it must possess some special efficacy. All the means of grace are efficacious to salvation. Prayer—the Word—preaching—the supper—Christian fellowship, have each

peculiar efficacy, and in like manner baptism. But its efficacy does not lie in any peculiar influence imparted to the water used; or in any official virtue possessed by the person administering. Were its power inherent in the ordinance, or in him administering it, it would be an incantation or charm and no sacrament. The efficacy of baptism, then, is similar to the efficacy of any other means of grace—that is, it is efficacious when properly used; or in other words its efficacy results from a belief of the truth which the ordinance symbolises. It has no more power to make the subject of it a Christian really, than circumcision had the power to make one circumcised "a Jew inwardly." The observance of sacraments is beneficial, just as far as they are observed with intelligence and faith, and no farther. The fact that baptism is a seal, guarantees that upon the recipient performing his part, God will be faithful in the accomplishment of all that He has pledged Himself to, in the covenant of which it is the seal. What was true of the brazen serpent is true of baptism. He who used it aright obtained the promised blessing; but as the efficacy was not in the serpent, but in Him who appointed it, so is it in the case of baptism. The use is ours, the effect is His. As a means of grace the ordinance is invaluable, as through it, the Spirit may effect the regeneration of which it is the symbol; but it no more infallibly secures grace to the subject of it, than do any other means of salvation secure the salvation of those who enjoy them. As the blessings symbolised in this ordinance, constitute the very life of God in the soul, they relate to the most perfectly sovereign of all the acts of God to His people. Were baptism efficacious to salvation, what would that be but the investiture of a frail man with a dispensation of grace, an abandonment of the

government of "the kingdom" to human hands, a making of salvation dependent upon human will. As well tell us that man presided in the councils of eternity, and determined the number and persons to be saved. Salvation is wholly of God; the subject of its blessings, and the manner of their bestowal are wholly His; and no more blasphemous claim could be made, than the claim to dispense the most precious blessings of heaven, by means of any ordinance whatever.

Doubtless, much of the error connected with this subject, has originated in identifying the benefits signified in the ordinance, with its administration. We see water applied to the body, and conclude that the blessings which it symbolises, are at the same time applied to the soul; and then many texts associate it with regeneration and pardon; but as already observed, it is the usage of Scripture to speak of a symbol as that which it represents. The truth stands thus:—Baptism *may* be made efficacious to the subject of it, *in the very moment* of its administration; or in *reflecting* upon it in after life, or on *witnessing* its administration to others. As the blessings symbolised in baptism are enjoyed by adults through faith, the time of their bestowal is not necessarily when we are baptized, but when we believe.

But as we are familiar with baptism, chiefly in relation to infants, the question occurs, how can it be beneficial to those who are incapable of faith? We remark then—that even were faith always essential to the validity of baptism, Scripture nowhere teaches, that in the case of infants, it must be their own personal faith. We shall hereafter have occasion to show, that upon the faith of parents, children were baptized by apostolic hands. If we believe in the moral pollution of infants, why not believe in their spiritual

purification? Although incapable of faith, who shall affirm that they are incapable of the second birth, of which faith is the result? No more is an adult capable of faith till he is born again. If then the second birth, is wholly of God in both instances, who shall deny the possibility of infant renewal? and if so, who shall so limit the Holy One, as to say that He may not in the moment of baptism, or on the first dawn of existence, or subsequently ere intelligence is exercised, renew the soul, and do for it, all implied in baptism? We pray for our children, although they are unable to join in prayer, and who doubts that God answers such prayers? If then they may receive the benefit of prayer, why not of baptism? Nor do I at all think that it is going beyond our warrant to affirm, that as baptism symbolises chiefly a work which is wholly Divine, that work *may* in the case of infants, be coincident with the proper observance of the ordinance. It is when in the path of duty, we have the fullest assurance to hope for the Divine blessing. The efficacy of the ordinance, then, resides not in itself, or in him administering it, but in God.

5th, *In baptism, parents dedicate their children to God.*

We naturally love our children, and Christianity sanctifies the parental affection. The first wish of a Christian parent is that of Abraham, "O that Ishmael might live before thee." He longs to dedicate his children to God, and baptism meets this desire. We feel and know, they are His by the double claims of creation and redemption. The act of dedication is prompted by another feeling. There is joy at the birth of a child, but to a Christian parent this joy is qualified by the thought, that it inherits a corrupt nature. As we peer in upon that little one, sleeping in unconscious beauty, sad-

dened feelings come over us, at the thoughts of the terrible possibilities that pertain to it. The provision, then, which baptism symbolises for the salvation of our offspring, counteracts the despondency which would otherwise overcome us. God has ever proved his regard for children, by comprehending them within the scope of his promises. When His people of old stood before the Mount to enter into covenant with Him, their children were with them; when He gave laws to His people, they were commanded to teach them to their children; when the new dispensation was introduced, the announcement was made, "of such is the kingdom of heaven;" when parents were baptized their households were baptized with them; when Gospel duties were enjoined, children were comprehended in them. (Matt. xix. 14; Acts xvi. 14, 15, 33, xviii. 8; 1 Cor. i. 16, xvi. 16; Eph. vi. 1-6; Col. iii. 18-23.)

On all of these grounds, parents are warranted to entertain the best hopes of their children; and they but comply with the yearnings of sanctified affection, when they, in baptism, devote them to God's glory, and commit them to His care.

6th, *Baptism imposes solemn obligations upon all receiving it.*

In the case of adults it imposes a belief of the doctrines of Scripture, and obedience to its commandments; but as we are rather viewing the subject with special reference to the children of believers, we more particularly refer to the duty which it imposes upon the parents of the baptized child. It is customary, on presenting a child for baptism, to require of the parent corresponding duties. To these we shall fully advert, when we speak of the religious training of children. Suffice it to observe here, that to make the child a Christian is not in the power of any one; but in baptism,

the parent solemnly pledges himself to employ every means by which the soul of his offspring is likely to be spiritually benefited.

How important then is it, that parents present their children for baptism, actuated by motives such as God will approve. In a country where a stigma attaches to the unbaptized, there is danger of being prompted by deference to public sentiment; but surely if there be any transaction in which we should be prompted solely by respect to Christ's authority, and the spiritual good of our offspring, it is this transaction.

II.

THE CHILDREN OF BELIEVERS, PROPER SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM.

"I cannot but take occasion to express my gratitude to God for my infant baptism; not only as an early admission to the visible body of Christ, but as furnishing my parents with a good argument for an early dedication of me to God in my childhood. If God has wrought a good work in my soul, I desire in humble thankfulness to acknowledge the influence of my infant baptism upon it."—*Matthew Henry.*

ALL admit that believers are fit subjects of the ordinance; but those who contend for immersion as the *mode*, contend also, that such alone are proper subjects of it. We, on the contrary, maintain that the infants of all professing Christians are equally entitled to it. We admit that certain circumstances afford an advantage in the argument to our baptist brethren; but these circumstances do not settle the question in their favour. Adult baptisms are alone distinctly specified in the New Testament history, hence Baptists seize upon these, and argue that adult baptism is alone Scriptural; as well argue, that because infant baptism is common among ourselves, that infant baptism is alone Scriptural. The case stands thus. On the introduction of Christianity to any country, adult baptism will necessarily be the first and most prominent; but as Christianity gains ground, the practice will

be reversed, and infant baptism will occupy the chief place. Now, such were the circumstances, in which the baptisms recorded in the New Testament were administered. The Book of Acts, which is the chief record of these, is essentially a missionary narrative. But although adult baptisms are alone specified, a comprehensive view of all the circumstances of the case, lead to the conclusion that the baptism of children was even more common.

Now then for the proof.

1st, *Children were included in the covenant made with Abraham, which was in substance the new covenant, the covenant of grace, the covenant which is the basis of the Christian Church, the covenant under which we enjoy all our spiritual privileges, and under this covenant they received the sign and seal of circumcision.*

When Abram was nearly a hundred years old, God appeared to him—changed his name to Abraham, and entered into covenant with him (Gen. xii.—xviii). The covenant then made, consists evidently of two parts—the one spiritual and permanent, the other secular and temporary. Baptists, to get rid of the argument from circumcision, have denied the spiritual character of the Abrahamic covenant, and asserted that circumcision was a mere badge of nationality, a mere token of interest in the temporal blessings promised to Abraham. This, however, is only partially true. To prove its spiritual character, advert for a moment to its import. This covenant pledged God to be a God to His people—that in Abraham all the families of the earth should be blessed, or in other words, that Christ should be in the line of His posterity; it conferred the right to partake of the passover, which was undoubtedly a religious ordinance, in-

asmuch as it was symbolical of Christ; it conferred the right of admission to the sanctuary, the place specially dedicated to the worship of God: while, on the other hand, even an uncircumcised Israelite was to be denied this privilege. Circumcision, the seal of the covenant, is distinctly designated "a seal of the righteousness of faith," and Paul affirms that God "preached before the gospel unto Abraham," speaks of "the blessing of Abraham coming on the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ," and declares "that the covenant was confirmed before of God in Christ." Thus the grand stipulation of the covenant was the promise of a Saviour, and of gratuitous justification through His righteousness. Justification was sealed by it to all believers, of whom Abraham is the common father; and sanctification was equally signified and sealed by means of it, for God promised to circumcise the hearts of His ancient people. (Gen. xvii. 7, xii. 3; Exod. xii. 48; Ezek. xliv. 9; Gen. xvii. 4; Gal. iii. 7-8; Rom. iv. 11; Gal. iii. 14-17; Deut. xxx. 6; Rom. ii. 28-29.) Could we then have the spiritual character of the Abrahamic covenant more distinctly announced? That covenant was, in fact, the basis and charter of the Old Testament Church, which, although less spiritual in its character than that of the New dispensation, was still the Church of God; and not only so, but it is the covenant which embraces the universal, visible Church of Christ.

Now, the seal of this covenant was circumcision. "This," saith God, "is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee: Every man-child among you shall be circumcised" (Gen. xvii. 10). This rite certified to all to whom it was administered, that the covenant made with Abraham was in force, and that they were

led to its privileges; and farther, Paul informs us that it "a seal of the righteousness of the faith which Abraham being yet uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all ı that believe, though they be not circumcised, that righteess might be imputed unto them also" (Rom. iv. 11). ce, it is evident, this covenant was made with us the of Abraham, as well as with the Jews: he was the ır of believers in our nation, as well as theirs. Now, it disputably certain, that from Abraham to Moses, and Moses through the dispensation which he established, ɔ the coming of the Son of God, children were by this ıtory rite recognised as members of the visible Church. then, the children of God's people are included in the nant made with Abraham—the covenant under which ɔur religious privileges are enjoyed—it is reasonable to lude, that children still stand in the same relation to and His Church that they ever did, and that as they ved the first seal, they are equally entitled to the ıd. But Dr Judson, in his sermon on Baptism, asks, not the prohibition of the token of a covenant, an cit declaration that the covenant is abolished?" We t that circumcision is abolished, but this does not ɣ that the covenant itself has been abrogated. When? e? and by whom was it abolished? "If ye be Christ's," Paul, "then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs accordo the promise" (Gal. iii. 29). What promise could this but the promise of Abraham's covenant? If, then, vers are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the ıise, Abraham's covenant must still be in force. A ıant is one thing, and its seal is another; and a covemay stand while its seal is changed. It might as be argued, that because the form of Divine worship,

and the government of the Church have been changed by the introduction of Christianity, the Church itself has ceased. The covenant is no more "abolished" by the introduction of the Christian dispensation, than it was done away by the giving of the ceremonial law. This very idea the Apostle refutes (Gal. iii. 15-17). If, then, it continued unchanged under the second or ceremonial dispensation, what hinders that, so far as its grand and universal aspect is concerned, it should remain unchanged under a third dispensation?

Infants were ever in the Church, and certainly it was no part of Christ's work to cast them out.

2d, *Prophets, Apostles, and Christ Himself taught that the relation of children to the Church would continue unimpaired.*

How expressive of this fact are the memorable words of our Lord: "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God" (Matt. xix. 14). What significance do these words acquire, when it is remembered that they were uttered by the adorable Redeemer, who appeared to Abraham, and said, "I will be a God unto thee and thy seed after thee" (Gen. xvii. 7). By the phrase *kingdom of heaven*, and *kingdom of God*, we are evidently to understand the dominion of grace on earth, and this dominion perfected in the glory of heaven. Our Lord, then, asserts, that it consists of such, or that such are fit subjects of it. To evade the force of this conclusion, Baptists hold, that our Lord meant only to say, that "the kingdom of heaven consists of those of a childlike disposition." This, no doubt, was also taught by Him, as is evident from the parallel passage (Mark x. 15); but that He must have meant children literally, in the rebuke to His disciples, is plain beyond dispute. They were *little* chil-

dren, which were brought to Him, for He took them up in His arms; but what rebuke would there have been in His words, were we to understand Him to say, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for the kingdom of heaven consists of those of childlike disposition?" It may, however, be asked, how does this support their title to baptism? It does so, inasmuch as it proves, that the relation of children to the Church remained unimpaired. "Doth Christ take them into His arms," asks Baxter, "and would He not have them all put in the visible Church? For my part, seeing Christ hath given me so full a discovery of His will on this point, I will boldly adventure to follow His rule, and would rather answer Him upon His own encouragement for admitting a hundred infants into His Church, than answer for keeping one out."

On the day of Pentecost we find Peter declaring to his hearers, "The promise is unto you and to your children" (Acts ii. 39, iii. 25). What "promise?" asks the Gentile hearer. The Jew will tell you, replies Peter. The "promise" which he esteemed above all others, was the promise of God, to be a God unto him and to his seed after him (Gen. xvii. 7). And thus the Jews evidently understood the apostle, for among all their objections to Christianity, they never complained of it excommunicating their children from the Church of God. And did not Judaizing teachers contend for the continued observance of circumcision? In opposition, it was affirmed that henceforth circumcision profited nothing, but never that the relation of children to the Church had been abrogated.

Farther, the apostle Paul announces a most important principle, bearing directly upon the question before us. A case presented itself which must be of frequent occurrence

—the case of husband and wife, one of whom remained an unbeliever. What, then, were the relation to the Church of the children of such parents? "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife," says the apostle, "and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy" (1 Cor. vii. 14). The language evidently implies that children had a certain relation to the Church, and the question is, if, under the new or Christian dispensation, the unbelief of either parent destroyed that relationship? The apostle declares that it did not. The believing parent sanctified or made holy the unbelieving parent; but how could this be? Is not the production of holiness solely the work of the Spirit? How then can it be ascribed to any human being whatever? Let it be observed in explanation, that the word *holy* has two senses in Scripture. It may signify either purity of moral character or consecration to God. Saints are holy persons, that is, pure in heart; but the Sabbath, the Temple, Canaan, the nation of Israel, are all said to be holy, that is, consecrated to God (Lev. xx. 26; Ezra. ix. 2). Thus the children were holy. The Jews regarded those beyond the pale of Judaism as "unclean," and all within it as "holy." Paul then teaches, that as under the Jewish dispensation the faith of either parent sanctified the whole household, so is it under the Christian dispensation.

Our Baptist brethren attempt to destroy the force of this passage, by asserting, that by *holy* and *unclean* we are to understand *legitimate* and *illegitimate;* but who, save themselves, can believe that the legitimacy of children depends on the moral or religious character of their parents? This word *holy* occurs some seven hundred times in the original Scriptures, but never once does it bear the sense of *legiti-*

mate. The apostle certainly does not contend for hereditary holiness, or that either parent communicates to children that purity of heart in which holiness in its highest sense consists, but that the children are holy in the sense of having been born within the Church, and consequently to be claimed for God's service. The passage, then, evidently assumes, that where both parents were believers, there could be no question as to the spiritual rights of their children. The apostle simply asserts the principle that the unbelief of one parent would not invalidate the children's interest in the Covenant of God.

Farther, the continued relation of children to the Church is proved by the Church's continued identity under the Christian dispensation. It is common to speak of the Old and New Testament Church, as if the fact of there being two dispensations necessitated there being two churches. The prophets, however, regarded the Church under both, as one and the same. They uniformly represent the Gentiles as gathered into the original Church, and the Jews as restored to the Church from which they had been cut off (Isaiah xlix. 20-22; Amos, ix. 11, 12; Acts xv. 14-17); and we find the apostles speaking in similar terms. Nowhere is it hinted that on the introduction of Christianity the ancient Church was abolished. The Mosaic ritual was abolished, but not the Church. No more does the boy lose his identity in his transition to manhood, than did the Church lose its identity on attaining the plenitude of light and privilege. This fact is distinctly taught in Scripture. The Church is represented under the figure of an olive tree (Rom. xi. 17-24), the natural branches of which, that is the Jews, are broken off, because of unbelief, and the branches of a wild olive, that is the Gentiles, are grafted in their place;

but the stock and root remain unchanged, while the recovery of the Jews is described as "a grafting them in again into their own olive tree." If, then, the Church continues the same, the relation of children to it remains unimpaired. Such is the doctrine taught by prophets, and by Christ and His apostles.

3d, *Baptism has evidently come in the room of circumcision.*

The command of our Lord was to go, teach, and convert the nations, not *circumcising*, but *baptising* them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matt. xxviii. 16-19; Mark xvi. 15, 16). Such a transition accords with other changes, consequent upon the passing away of the Jewish dispensation. The Lord's Supper has come in the room of the Passover, the Lord's-day in the room of the seventh-day Sabbath, and the Christian ministry in the room of the Levitical priesthood. But how do we know that baptism has come in the room of circumcision? We know first of all, that circumcision, as a sign and seal of the Covenant, has been abolished. Such was the decision of the great Jerusalem assembly (Acts xv. 10). Then we have the institution of baptism, which is of the same spiritual significance as circumcision. A moment's comparison will make this apparent. Circumcision was the rite by which access was obtained to the Church of God under the former dispensation; while baptism is the ordinance by which admission is obtained to the Christian Church. Circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith, that is, of the justification of a sinner through faith in the righteousness of Christ; while baptism is symbolical of the remission of sins, which is through faith in Christ. Circumcision was a symbol of spiritual cleansing—"The Lord thy God will

circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul;" while baptism is symbolical of the same divine renewal. (Rom. iv. 11; Acts ii. 38; Deut. xxx. 6, 10, 16; Rom. vi. 4; 1 Pet. iii. 21.) Baptism differs from circumcision simply in those points in which the new dispensation differs from the old one. Baptism is not restricted to the eighth day after birth, and it is administered to female as well as to male children, for in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female.

It is no doubt true, that we have no express announcement to the effect that baptism henceforth took the place of circumcision; but this accords with Christ's mode of acting. There is no announcement that the Lord's day was to supersede the seventh-day Sabbath; or that the Lord's Supper was to supersede the Passover. The change in all these instances was left to the natural course of events; and thus an easy transition, accomplished all that could have been effected by a violent or sudden revolution (Acts xxi. 17-26).

There was a propriety in circumcision passing away and being substituted by something different; for although, like the Sabbath, it had existed previous to the Jewish economy, yet its observance was so identified with that economy, that there was a propriety in the adoption of a new seal, coincident with a new dispensation, which was to embrace, not Jews, but all peoples in its scope. It, in fact, constituted part of the middle wall by which the Jews were separated from all other nations; hence, when the wall of separation was abolished, it was becoming that it should be superseded by a seal or sign of more comprehensive import.

Now, if it be denied, that baptism has taken the place of circumcision, then we have a covenant without a seal; and how would the Jews have regarded this deprivation of privilege? It would have constituted the strongest ground for their assaults upon Christianity. The very silence of the New Testament upon the subject, is one of the best arguments in our favour. "Uncircumcised," was the bitterest taunt that could be addressed to a Jew. He would sooner have laid his child in the grave, than permit him to grow up without having on him the marks of the cherished rite. Or suppose a Gentile father brought under the influence of the truth, and informed that, under the new dispensation, there could be no place for his offspring, might he not have complained that he was denied a privilege which he might obtain by embracing Judaism. Scripture uniformly represents the Church as having been favoured with a great enlargement of privilege on the introduction of Christianity. Then the son, formerly under tutors and governors, and in a condition little better than that of a servant, was declared of age, and admitted to the full enjoyment of his inheritance (Gal. iv. 1-7). If, however, children were then deprived of their place in the Church, it would not have been enlargement, but diminution, with which she had been visited. The silence of Scripture upon the subject, proves, that so long as the apostles could appeal to baptism, they were placed at no disadvantage by the abolition of circumcision. Did not Peter, on the day of Pentecost, declare, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ; for the promise is unto you *and to your children*, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call?" What promise would the language suggest to a Jew, but the promise made

to Abraham. If, then, children, equally with their parents, retained their interest in the Covenant of God, would they, on the baptism of their parents, be denied the privilege of joining in its reception? If children had not still all the rights they ever had, why speak of them at all?

4th, *The argument is completed by a consideration of the instances of household baptism narrated in the New Testament.*

At Philippi two households are mentioned in the apostolic narrative, as having been baptized—namely, that of Lydia, and that of the jailor. At Corinth there were also two—that of Crispus, the chief ruler of the Synagogue, and that of Stephanas, whose family were the first fruits of Achaia; while in Cesarea, Cornelius the centurion, together with his near kinsmen and friends, were baptized by Peter (Acts xvi. 14, 15, 33; xviii. 8; 1 Cor. i. 16; Acts x. 48).

Now, it will be observed, that these cases have all the appearance of being but conspicuous examples of a uniform practice, and that not a single instance is recorded of the mention of a family or household in connection with the conversion of its head, and its head alone being baptized—that not a word hints that children or servants were denied the ordinance on the ground that they were not believers. As entire households were circumcised on the faith of their head (Gen. xvii. 23), the practice seems, by common understanding, to have been adopted in the case of baptism. The apostles, familiarised with the practice of circumcising infants, would never hesitate as to baptising children. The words of Christ to Zaccheus acquire remarkable significance when viewed in this connection: "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham." The words of Paul to the jailor are of similar

import: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Luke xix. 9; Acts xvi. 31). Why this mention of *house* by the Divine Saviour and inspired apostle, if children did not retain unchanged their relation to the covenant, and consequently their rights to its sign and seal? These significant declarations, when viewed in connection with apostolic practice in regard to baptism, seem to be conclusive upon the point.

Baptists, however, make much of the words respecting the jailor—"He rejoiced, believing in God with all his house" (Acts xvi. 34). From this they infer that all believed; but on looking at the original, we find that *believing* and *rejoiced* are in the singular, and therefore refer alone to the jailor; while the word *with* has no equivalent in the original, and has been supplied by our translators. Had the family believed, the words would doubtless have been in the plural. It is also argued that there is no proof that there were children in the households referred to. First of all, the force of the term employed in narrating these instances includes children. The same term is employed in hundreds of texts where such is evidently its import. Take a single example. It is said a bishop must be "one who ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection" (1 Tim. iii. 1-4). Let it be observed, then, that the word rendered house (οἶκος) is the same as is used in Acts xvi. 15, xviii. 8; 1 Cor. i. 16, in speaking of the households of Lydia, Crispus, and Stephanas. Is it not, then, a legitimate inference, that their households comprehended children? But farther, it is evident that in each instance one believed, but several were baptized. Take the first instance that presents itself as an example. A glance at the narrative of Lydia's conversion is sufficient to see, that while her household was

baptized, she alone believed. *She worshipped; she* heard Paul; *her* heart the Lord opened; *she* was *faithful*, or believing. In urging Paul and Silas to accept of her hospitality, she grounds her appeal solely on the fact of *her own* faith. Doubtless, in such a case, she would be disposed to make the argument as strong as she could; yet, she says not a word of the faith of any but herself. "If ye have judged ME to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide" (Acts xvi. 14, 15). Throughout the entire narrative, Lydia alone is represented as converted; and yet, not she alone, but she and her household are baptized. If, then, there were no children in the house, here is even the greater difficulty for our Baptist brethren to explain—the fact of unbelieving adults being baptized.

The head of the house believed, but the household was baptized. The conversion of households simultaneously, does not accord with God's usual procedure in the dispensation of grace. When did a case of family baptism occur under the ministry of a baptist? We never heard of an instance of the kind; and for this reason, family conversions, simultaneously effected, seldom or never occur; but in churches which practise infant baptism, instances of family baptism are by no means rare. Those holding Baptist views upon this point, to be consistent, must hold, not only that all the households referred to, were not only childless, but that those composing them, were not only capable of faith, but that they actually believed. But if such were the fact, why is it not stated? A conversion is certainly a more stupendous fact than a baptism. Are we to suppose then that the writer of the Acts, was so enthusiastic upon the subject of baptism, that in his estimation nothing could over-shadow it? The truth is, the term *household* as certainly compre-

hends the idea of children, as it does the idea of adults; and we would be as fully justified in declaring that the households mentioned had no adults, beyond those who believed, as the baptists are justified in declaring that they comprehended no children. It is then, by far the most natural supposition, that these households actually comprehended children. The mere mention of a household, instantly suggests children. Was it then necessary to a household embracing Christianity, that its juvenile members be first got rid of? Must a district, Herod-like, be cleared of its little ones, ere its evangelisation was possible? or did Christianity not rather, like Christ Himself, fold them in its bosom, receive them to its kingdom, and crown them with its blessings? The truth is, the exclusion of all children from such households, would never have been thought of, but for the effort to support a theory, to which their presence is fatal.

5th, *Before concluding this section of our subject, it may be proper to glance at the chief objections which have been urged in opposition to infant baptism.*

(*a*) *It is urged that as we have no express command to baptize infants, their baptism is unscriptural.*

We at once reply, that a fair inference is of as much authority as an express command. We have no express command respecting the observance of family worship, or the change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day the week, or for women observing the Lord's supper, or for the dedication of a specific portion of our income to religious purposes; and yet we regard all these as of Divine appointment, because we deduce by fair inference the will of God respecting them. Do Baptists refuse to worship God

in their families, to observe the Christian Sabbath, to admit women to the Lord's table, or to give a share of their income for Christian and benevolent objects, because no express command enforcing these can be adduced? But although no command is recorded, how know we that no command was given? The practice of the Apostles in respect to all these matters was doubtless regulated by the will of Christ, and their example is to us the interpretation and expression of that will. As we then find that the baptized households, by fair inference comprehended children, we regard their practice as conclusive upon the point.

(*b*) *It is alleged that as Jesus was not baptized till He was thirty years of age, the baptism of infants is unscriptural.*

To which we reply, that in the very nature of the case, Jesus could not have been baptized in his infancy, as Christian baptism was not then instituted, and as the truth symbolised in baptism was not then disclosed. Baptism comprehends the belief of a plan which was not completed till the Saviour died. John's baptism was totally different from Christian baptism. John's ministry had no direct relation to the covenant under which infants obtain their right to baptism, but it had special reference to the mission of Jesus, and consequently he called upon all to repent, to change their views respecting the Messiah, and cherish the frame of mind becoming the prospect of His advent. He himself designates it "the baptism of repentance, for the forgiveness of sins" (Mark i. 4; Luke iii. 3). Not that he forgave sins, but simply gave the seal or sign of forgiveness. Paul farther explained it when he said, "John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ

Jesus" (Acts xix. 4). In the case of Christ, however, its import must be regarded as modified, inasmuch as he had no sin to repent of, and could not with propriety be regarded as having embraced a belief of His own advent. The reason which He gives for submitting to John's baptism is, "For thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Mat. iii. 15). Thus it became Him to recognise the office of John, as of Divine appointment; and as Alford expresses it, "it became Him, being in the likeness of sinful flesh, to go through those appointed rites and purifications which belonged to that flesh." Thus then John's baptism was exclusively adult baptism, infants being incapable of what it symbolised; and not only so, but the baptism of Christ unquestionably pertained to His Messianic calling, and consequently is no more an example to us than is His death. It was His public consecration to office; for on Jesus ascending from the water, John beheld the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and resting upon him (John i. 32). As a symbol of internal purification, baptism could have in his case no significance; but as a sign of outward purification or separation to the work to which he was appointed, it was most appropriate. Hitherto He had been associated with the common engagements of social life, one with his brethren save in their sins, but now He was invested with the high office of the Christ of God. Those who deduce from a transaction like this, an argument for the baptism of adults to the exclusion of infants, must be reduced to desperate straits for evidence on behalf of their favourite theory.

(*c*) *Infants, we are told, being incapable of faith, are unfit for baptism.*

When our Lord says, "He that believeth and is baptized

shall be saved" (Mark xvi. 16), He no doubt teaches, that baptism should be administered to believers. But if only such ought to be baptized, then, on the same ground, it may be argued, that only those who believe can be saved, excluding thereby infants from salvation as certainly as from baptism. It is of those who are capable of faith our Lord speaks; He has in such a declaration no reference to infants at all. In another passage it is said, "If any will not work, neither shall he eat." Are infants therefore to be denied food? While infants are incapable of faith, they may nevertheless be saved; but they cannot be saved without regeneration and justification. If then they actually receive the blessings of which baptism is symbolical, on what ground shall they be denied the symbol which represents them?

(*d*) *Baptism, we are told, can do infants no good.*

It is the old objection, "What profit is there in circumcision?" Is it no advantage, we ask, to be received within the pale of the Church of God? Baptism, like circumcision, is a sign and seal of spiritual blessings; and are these to be lightly esteemed? Is it no advantage to the child that its spiritual need has been acknowledged in circumstances so solemn; that God has recognised its rights to spiritual mercies, and that parents have pledged themselves to bring up their offspring "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?" It may indeed be frankly admitted, that an infant can receive no benefit from having a few drops of water sprinkled upon its face; and the benefit would be the same were the whole body immersed. The benefit results from the faith of the parent in the first instance, and subsequently from the child's own acknowledgment of the ordinance. "Is

it no good," says Baxter, "to have a solemn delivery of a sealed pardon of original sin, and covenant relation to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and a visible title to the blessings of the covenant; and to be no more strangers, but fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the Church or household of God? Is it not a privilege that you may take a lease of lands for your child's life as well as your own, and make him a party in the covenant, and bind him to pay the rent, though he understands it not? And if at age he thinks he is wronged, he may quit his part in Christ and heaven whenever he pleases." Nor is it any disparagement of the ordinance, that it is not always accompanied by spiritual blessings. Who would condemn the preaching of the Gospel, because all who hear it do not believe? It was the judicious remark of the venerable Philip Henry, "If infant baptism were more improved, it would be less disputed."

(*e*) *Why not in like manner, it is asked, admit children to the Lord's Table?*

The apostles, we reply, while they baptized households, in no instance admitted households to the Sacramental Supper. Nor is it, we think, difficult to discover the reason. Baptism is symbolical of union with Christ, a thing of which children are capable; the Supper denotes fellowship with Christ, a thing of which they are incapable. A child may be baptized without intelligence; but intelligence is required of the worthy communicant, "This do in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. xi. 25). *Remembrance* implies the exercise of memory. The Lord's Supper also implies the believing acceptance of Christ, of which infants are incapable. In baptism we may be passive, but in the Lord's Supper we must be active.

The position of our Baptist brethren in seeking to exclude children from this ordinance, is contrary to the entire genius of the Gospel. If under the Jewish dispensation, God formally separated His people from the heathen, and in this separation included their children; and if to make this separation visible, He commanded to put upon them a visible token of separation—are we to believe, that under a better dispensation, the privilege is withdrawn, and those so dear to His people are left without, with the ungodly and heathen? If denied baptism, what token have they, that He still claims them for Himself? To demand that the Church in its most perfect earthly form, renounce a privilege which it has enjoyed from the first, is to demand a surrender which no authority but God's can enforce.

One of the great evils of the day is the neglect of the religious education of the young; and we could conceive of nothing more likely to aggravate this evil than their severance from the Church, and a denial of their ancient place in the covenant. On the other hand, nothing has tended to keep alive a sense of the Church's responsibility for their religious training, like a full recognition of its abiding relation to the children of believers. It is chiefly upon the ground of their baptism, as we shall afterwards show, rests the obligation of the Church to concern itself with a religious training of the young.

III.

THE MODE OF BAPTISM.

"The most ancient pictorial delineations of baptism (as early, probably, as the sixth century), represent the Candidate as poured upon kneeling, while none exist of immersion. The monuments of the Greek Church represent Christ and John as standing in the water, and John pouring water on the head of Jesus."—*Chapin's Primitive Church.*

AS to the mode of administering baptism, neither our Lord nor His apostles have given any *direct* instruction. The words to be repeated in its administration are expressly given, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Mat. xxviii. 19); but not a word is added as to the quantity of water to be used, or the manner of its application to the body. Nor in narrating the various instances of baptism recorded in the New Testament, do the writers afford a hint upon the subject. This may seem extraordinary, but it is not singular. Neither do they tell us what faith is, or how we may believe; and evidently for this reason, that both faith and baptism were quite understood by those whom they addressed. No more did they think of explaining faith, than they would have thought of explaining walking, eating, or seeing. Every one knew that it meant believing; and so baptism was sufficiently understood in New

Testament times, to render explanation unnecessary. There were "the divers baptisms" of the Jewish ritual—the baptism of John and of Christ's disciples; and with these full in view, the mode of administration was obvious. In determining the point for ourselves, then, we must be guided not only by the meaning of the term, which designates the ordinance, but also by its import, and the circumstances in which it was administered; and a consideration of these, leaves upon our mind the conviction, that it was by sprinkling, and not by immersion.

1st, *It may prepare the way for an intelligent conclusion as to the mode of baptism, to show the import of the terms employed in the New Testament, to designate the ordinance.*

The words employed in the New Testament to designate the ordinance are two: βαπτιζω, to baptize: and βαπτισμα, baptism. Our translators, it will be observed, have not attempted to translate these words, but have given to them an English costume. Now our Baptist brethren hold that in every instance they signify to immerse; we, on the contrary, hold that while in classical Greek they do sometimes signify to dip or immerse, in the New Testament, not an instance of immersion baptism is to be found. Even were Baptists able to establish that the words in question, originally meant to dip, plunge, immerse, or bathe, it would avail them nothing. The point is not to be determined by original import, but by the sense in which the terms was understood by the Scripture writers when the ordinance was instituted. The Hebrew word rendered *man*, signifies red earth; and the Greek word rendered *soul*, signifies breath. Did we, then, in reading Scripture in the original language, attach to these words their primary import, we would certainly

misinterpret Scripture. And so were it proved that the word to baptize, originally signifies to immerse, it would by no means settle the question.

A few examples will be sufficient to show, that to sprinkle was a common signification of the word, and this established; the circumstances in which the ordinance was administered in New Testament times, lead us to the conclusion that it was administered by the apostles, by sprinkling or pouring water upon the body. "Our fathers," says the apostle, "were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." That they were not *immersed* in either is obvious. The Egyptians were *immersed* in the sea, but not the Israelites; for we are told they went through upon "dry land" (1 Cor. x. 1, 2; Exod. xiv. 29). Nor were they immersed in the cloud; at one time it was a wall behind, hiding them from their pursuers, at another time, a canopy above shielding them from the sun. For aught we know, the cloud was *dry;* or if not, why not suppose, that like other clouds, it "dropped," or distilled its contents. The Israelites might be sprinkled by the spray of the one, and overshadowed by the other, but not immersed by either. Again we read in Daniel iv. 33, "And his body was wet (baptized) with the dew of heaven." Now, dew does not immerse, but gently distills; hence he was wetted with the gentlest distillation that is known in nature. The partial application of liquid, then, to the body, is, in Scriptural language, baptism.

But farther, we have the leading idea of baptism, which is purification, identified with sprinkling. We read of the baptism of tables, or, as it is in the original, *couches* (Mark vii. 4, 8). These couches were large enough to accommodate several persons as they reclined at meals. Immersion, then,

in such a case, is out of the question. Cups and other vessels might be immersed, but surely couches or beds would not be so purified, and that in a land where water was far from being abundant, when one of the modes of ceremonial purification was by the sprinkling of water. Paul, in writing to the Hebrews, says of Judaism, that it "stood only in meats, and drinks, and divers (baptisms) washings (Heb. ix. 10); and in verses 13, 19, and 21, he specifies some of these "divers baptisms," and informs us that they consisted in *sprinkling* with ashes, with water, and with blood. "When Moses had spoken every precept to all the people, according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and *sprinkled* both the book, and all the people." Such were the "divers baptisms" of the old dispensation. None of them were by immersion. Priests, tents, lepers, people, Levites, houses, and vessels for domestic use, were all ceremonially purified by *sprinkling*. (Lev. i. 3–14; viii. 30; xiv. 7, 51; Exod. xxiv. 5-8; Num. viii. 6, 7.) "It is difficult to believe," says the Rev. Dr Whedon of Michigan University, "that in the arid desert, in which, for forty years, the Israelites wandered, where, at the present day, the Mohammedan Arab rubs sand for water upon his body, as his sacred ablution, they could have expended water in voluntary religious immersions." Hence it is evident that the Jews were, by their own practice, fully prepared for comprehending the mode and significance of the rite in question.

Thus, then, it is perfectly obvious, whatever may be the import of the terms in question as used in classical Greek, that to *dip*, *plunge*, or *immerse*, are not their meaning when employed in Scripture to designate baptism; but that they

are invariably employed in the New Testament to express baptism by *sprinkling*, and that a baptism significant of purification. The fact is, that purification is the one grand idea which the entire system of baptism, under both dispensations, exhibits; and hence the importance of viewing this ordinance in the light of Old Testament practice.

2d, *We go on to remark, that sprinkling best accords with that of which baptism is symbolical.*

It is admitted that the leading idea in baptism is purification by the Holy Spirit. If, then, water, the visible purifier of all things sensible, represents the purifier of all things spiritual, it is reasonable to expect that the manner of applying the water should accord with the represented mode of applying the spirit. In the Lord's supper the bread is *broken* (1 Cor. xi. 23, 24; Acts ii. 42; xx. 7), in its administration, and there is significance in the act. Whether, then, does immersion or sprinkling best accord with Scripture representations of the bestowal and operation of the Spirit? Logicians tell us that the best definition of a word, is to point to the object and name it. Point to a house and say, that is a house; to a ship sailing and say, that is sailing. Thus guided, we can be at no loss to determine the mode of baptism. God has twice made spiritual baptism visible. When Christ was baptized, "the Spirit *descended* like a dove, and lighted upon Him." Both John and Jesus predicted another baptism of the Spirit by fire. What, then, was its mode. By immersion? Certainly not. When on the day of Pentecost, the promise was fulfilled, "There appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and *it sat upon them.*" The symbol, in both instances, descended, but there was no immersion in it. With these instances before us,

may we not anew hear the injunction: "See thou make all things according to the pattern shown to thee in the mount." (Matt. iii. 16, 11; Luke iii. 16; Acts i. 4, 5; ii. 3).

With this, too, accords numerous texts, in which the bestowal of the Spirit is represented. He is said to "fall," to be "poured out," to "come down like rain," to be "sprinkled," to be "shed" (Isa. xxxii. 15, xliv. 3; Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26; Ps. lxxii. 6; Hos. vi. 3; Acts ii. 17; Tit. iii. 5, 6.) Nay, in the last text quoted, we have the bestowal of the Spirit referred to in connection with the ordinance of baptism, in such a manner as to be decisive of the question: "According to His mercy He saved us, by the WASHING of regeneration, even the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He SHED on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Tit. iii. 5, 6). If then rain, and dew, and sprinkling, are employed to represent the Spirit's bestowal—if He is said to be poured out, to descend, to be shed; and if water ought to be applied in baptism, so as more clearly to represent the mode of the Spirit's bestowal, it is evident that sprinkling and not immersion is the Divinely-appointed mode of its administration. Can we suppose that this ordinance was administered by apostles instructed by our Lord, in a manner which directly contradicts the known mode of the Spirit's bestowal, when it might have been administered so as to symbolise and explain it? We can see significance in sprinkling or pouring; we can see none in immersion or plunging.

3d, *The various instances of baptism recorded in the New Testament, best accord with the idea of sprinkling.*

We have narrated several instances of indoor baptism.

(*a*) The first is that of Paul (Acts ix. 10-19.) At the time of his baptism he was in a state of great bodily weakness. So great was his perturbation on a discovery of his sinfulness, that for three days he was unable to partake of food. It was when in this state "he arose and was baptized," and "then received meat and was strengthened." Here we have marked particularity; so marked, that had he been baptized by immersion, surely some allusion to the fact would have been recorded. That he was baptized on the spot is evident. We read that he "arose," but not a word of *going*, that he might be immersed. That convenience for immersion was at hand is not at all probable.

(*b*) The baptism of Cornelius belongs to this class (Acts x. 44–47.) He was a devout man, and while listening to the private instruction of Peter, "the Holy Ghost *fell* on all them which heard the word." Upon witnessing this the apostle asked, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?" If God has poured out the Spirit upon them, why not pour out upon them the baptismal water? The question implies that the water was to be *brought* to them; not that they were to go to the water. The Holy Ghost *fell*, and water sufficient for the ordinance was at hand. Now, sprinkling is consistent with these two facts; while immersion is not.

(*c*) The baptism of the jailor's family is equally conclusive in favour of sprinkling (Acts xvi. 33). In this case the ordinance was administered in a prison, and at midnight. It was administered before Paul and his companion left the prison; but what convenience did a Roman prison possess for immersion? Modern baths were as yet unknown. The discipline of a prison, if discipline it could be called, was characterised by heartless severity. Paul and

Silas at the very first, had their feet made fast in the stocks. Is the idea of immersion consistent with such a place and such a time?

Now, it is worthy of notice that baptism is always spoken of as an ordinance that might be immediately administered —a thing incredible upon the supposition that it was by immersion. Are we to suppose that the dwellings in the East were usually provided with the necessary baths? Why, even in our own country, where water abounds, how few of the dwellings of the common people would admit of baptism by immersion. Surely, then, if primitive baptisms were administered by immersion, we would have had some allusion in the instances adverted to, of those baptized having resorted to places where water could be obtained in sufficient quantity; but we have no such intimation. It is also worthy of notice, that while we read in cases of outdoor baptism, of those baptized going down to the water and coming up from the water, phraseology which quite accords with baptism in rivers or ponds; in the case of household baptisms, not a word is given which indicates *approaching to* or *retiring from* the baptismal element. May we not infer then, that it was not by immersion, but by sprinkling, the ordinance was administered?

The outdoor baptisms narrated in the New Testament are equally in accordance with the idea of sprinkling.

(*a*) Of these were those administered by John (Matt. iii. 5, 6; Mark i. 5; John iii. 23). Thousands, doubtless, attended upon his ministry; and to baptize such multitudes by immersion was a bare impossibility. Or can we suppose that they were provided with the requisite change of clothing? while the fact that many of them were women, is

sufficient to show that baptism could not be by immersion—immersion in such a case being at variance with all ideas of Eastern propriety.

The same difficulty does not attend the supposition that our Lord was baptized by immersion; there is nothing, however, in the narrative which requires us to believe that He was. It is no doubt said, that Jesus went up straightway out of the water (Mark i. 10; Matt. iii. 16); but any one acquainted with the force of Greek prepositions knows, that the phrase avails nothing to the idea of immersion. He "went up straightway out of the water," that is, he ascended the banks from the river. In the very chapter in Mark which records his baptism, it is said "John did baptize *in* the wilderness" (Mark i. 4). *In* Jordan and *in* the wilderness, do not indicate the mode of baptism, but simply the place of its administration. Nor is this all. John tells us, that he was the forerunner of Him who was to "sprinkle many nations," and that his own baptism was but the type of His who was to baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire (Matt. iii. 11; Isa. lii. 15). Then to this is to be added the fact, that immediately upon His baptism the Spirit *descended* like a dove upon Him (Mark i. 10). Can we then, with a knowledge of the fact that baptism is a symbolical rite, doubt that its mode was in accordance with the mode of bestowing that which it symbolizes? Sprinkling accords with the mode of bestowing the Spirit, immersion does not.

(*b*) The baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch belongs to the same class (Acts viii. 36-38). Joined in his journey by Philip the Evangelist, they unitedly read by the way the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the Messiah, in which it is predicted, "So shall He sprinkle many nations," a predic-

tion in the line of the command, "Go teach, baptize, all nations." Is it wonderful then that the eunuch should have suggested his own baptism? "See, here is water," said he, "what doth hinder me to be baptized?" He thus claimed the promised sprinkling. Philip had no doubt been explaining to him the nature and obligation of the ordinance. So "they went down both into the water, and he baptized him." Because "they went down into the water," and "came up out of the water," our Baptist brethren conclude that the eunuch was immersed. But as the Greek prepositions employed, bear also the force of *to* and *from;* the passage might be read, "They went down both *to* the water, and when they had come up both *from* the water." As all waters are to be found in hollow places; in wells, in pools, in rivers which run in valleys among the hills, or within their banks through the plain; such phrases as have been mentioned must be used in all cases in which men have occasion to approach them, for any purpose whatever. The mere circumstance of going down to water, and coming up again from it, cannot inform us of what was done at the water. In Gen. xxiv. 16, we are told that Rebekah "went down to the well—and came up." Does this imply that she immersed herself? No. "She went down to the well and filled her pitcher, and came up." In Judges vii. 5, Gideon "brought down the people unto the water." Was it to immerse them? No; it was to give them an opportunity of drinking.* Even were it proved then that Philip and the eunuch entered the water, that would not prove that immersion followed. Going *into* water is very different from going *under* water. So far as the prepositions are concerned they apply to both; but only one was baptized. Is

* Ewing's Essay on Baptism.

it not reasonable to infer that they have sole reference to approaching the water and retiring from it, and no reference whatever to what took place in it? Besides, a desert is not the place where rivers or fountains abound. There a pool sufficient to quench thirst would be prized more than a mine of gold. Is immersion, then, very probable in the case of the eunuch? Or, suppose that there had been found water enough for sprinkling, but not enough for immersion, would baptism have been impossible? "What," he might have said—"Was not the Messiah to sprinkle, and here is water enough for that." But no—even in a wilderness enough for the purpose was found, and is the fact not favourable to the supposition that he was baptized by sprinkling? (Acts viii. 36-38; Isa. lii. 15; Matt. xxviii. 19.)

(*c*) The baptism of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost is the most memorable instance upon record of Christian baptism (Acts ii. 37-42.) It was the third hour of the day, or nine o'clock in the morning, when Peter began to preach. It would appear that his discourse was a long one, for we are informed that he exhorted and testified with many other words. Then must have come the confession of these three thousand converts, leaving only a few hours for the administration of baptism, and yet they were all baptized that same day. Let it be remembered that many of them were strangers—some fifteen nations are mentioned by name. Again, we have to note, that they had no anticipation of their conversion to Christianity, and were not therefore provided with the change of raiment necessary for immersion. And where were they baptized? At Jerusalem; but here there were no rivers or fountains adequate to the immersion of a multitude. Neither Kedron nor Siloam at any season of the year were adequate to the purpose.

Then recurs the physical impossibility. Even had all the apostles been engaged in the work of immersion, its accomplishment within so limited a time was impossible. Grant that baptism was by sprinkling, and all difficulty disappears.

Upon the supposition that baptism in all these instances was by sprinkling, these baptismal scenes present a beauty and simplicity, in remarkable harmony with the genius of the Gospel; while baptism by sprinkling and baptism by immersion will bear no comparison as respects decency and significance. Who, free from the prejudice of sect, could ever suppose that Christianity was inaugurated by the public and promiscuous immersion of men and women? Would anything have been better fitted to excite the contempt of those who witnessed it? Would not its opponents, and of these there were many, have found in the new ordinance an occasion of derision? That they were forward to advance all conceivable objections to Christianity is evident; and certainly upon the practice of immersion they would have reared the most formidable of all. Even in our own country, at the present day, public baptisms by immersion, beget in the minds of spectators feelings most alien to the proper observance of the ordinance; while its private administration is resorted to by the young and the curious, as a fit occasion of amusement. Baptist ministers know too, that their mode of its administration constitutes one of the most formidable obstacles to a profession of the Gospel, upon the part of female converts, and those of delicate sensibility. Nor could persons of delicate health be baptized by immersion without placing their lives in jeopardy, especially in winter. We then adhere to our simple and expressive mode, as most in accordance with Scripture teaching and public decency.

4th, *It may be proper before closing, to advert to the fact, that our Baptist brethren adduce* Rom. vi. 3, 4, *and* Col. ii. 12, *as giving countenance to baptism by immersion.*

Because we have in these passages, the phrases—"buried with him by baptism into death," and "buried with him in baptism," it is argued that they teach that immersion is the Divinely-appointed mode of administering the ordinance. An unprejudiced examination of the texts, however, shows that they have no reference whatever to the point in dispute. Baptists have been led astray, by the supposed resemblance between immersion in water, and our mode of burying the dead. There is at the very outset, the blunder of confounding the manner of burial among ourselves, with the manner of Jewish interments, and specially with the mode of our Saviour's burial. We commonly bury by lowering the body into the grave, covering it with earth, and there leaving it. The mode of our Lord's burial was totally different from this. The body was laid, we are informed, "in a new tomb, hewn out in the rock." This tomb was evidently a cavity, the floor of which was upon a level with the ground outside; while within the cavity, there were, doubtless, the customary niches cut for the reception of the dead. It was a rich man's sepulchre, and here all the ordinary provision for a decent disposal of the dead had doubtless been made. Again, the entrance to such a place of burial, was not like the mouth of a pit, but a door; so we read of a stone being rolled *to* the door of the sepulchre, not placed *upon* it. Such is the force of the original. The disciples too are represented as *entering into it*, and *coming out* of it (Matt. xxvii. 60, xxviii. 2; Mark xvi. 5, 8; John xx. 6, 8). Now, between such a burial, and baptism by immersion, we can discover not the slightest resemblance.

What conceivable analogy is there between the immersion of a living person in water, whether forward or backward, whether once or three times, whether clothed or naked, and the carrying of a dead body into a cave, and placing it in a niche prepared for its reception? So far as we see, we can discover in baptism by immersion no resemblance to the mode of any people's burial whatever, or to the particular burial of Jesus in His rich friend's sepulchre. To give to baptism by immersion the slightest resemblance to our own mode of burial, it would be necessary not only to *dip* the body in water, but to *leave* it there. The *resemblance* on which the argument is founded is altogether imaginary, and disappears on such a reference to the Gospel narrative as we have made. If, then, the mode of our Lord's burial, gives no countenance to baptism by immersion, the texts quoted avail our Baptist brethren nothing. To deduce from either, proof on behalf of baptism by immersion, is to connive at the heresy of baptismal regeneration. No wonder that such teaching should lead the less intelligent of our Baptist brethren to ascribe to baptism regenerating power. From the passage in Romans, it appears that the apostle was meeting the oft-repeated charge, that the grace of God encouraged men to live in sin. Now, what answer would there be to such a charge in the assertion, that Christians had been baptized by immersion, and because so baptized, were one with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, and therefore delivered from the power of sin? Will the most blinded Baptists assume such a position and its consequences? A consideration of the imports of the texts quoted, would only render more evident their inappropriateness to the question in hand; but such a consideration is not requisite, as it is evident the apostle in penning them

made not the slightest allusion to immersion. Did Baptists give heed to the inexorable logic of facts, these passages would never more be named in connection with the controversy. Even a child, by turning to the Gospel narrative, could dispel in a moment the fancied resemblance of immersion baptism to Christ's burial.

The truth is, immersion baptism is a human device, and has come in with that love of ritualism, which so soon manifested itself in the Church. To Tertullian (A.D. 185) and Cyprian (A.D. 246) the innovation is mainly due; to them too, may be ascribed the practice of a separate immersion, at the mention of each person of the Godhead, in administering the ordinance; and with this innovation, we find associated chrismation or unction, signation or the sign of the cross, confirmation, sponsers, exorcism, consecration of baptismal water, clenic or bed baptism. So, if our Baptist brethren will appeal to antiquity, they may count the cost at which the appeal is made.* Or, if they prefer apostolic example, they may have it. Even Peter was possessed of this ritualistic spirit when he exclaimed, "Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." They who act like him require the admonition, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean, every whit" (John xiii. 9, 10). Peter was in error, in having so much respect to the extent of the application of water to the body. Rather let us, like Christ, have respect to that of which the water is symbolical. If the eating of a morsel of bread, in the sacrament of communion, constituted a symbolical supper, the reception of a little water, may surely be equally sufficient to constitute a symbolical washing.

* *See* "Mosheim's Church History," "Lardner's Works," and "Chancellor King's Inquiry."

It will be apparent, on a review of the whole matter, how full and satisfactory is the evidence for the administration of baptism as practised in the Presbyterian and Congregational churches of this country. As the argument is to a considerable extent inferential and circumstantial, no separate part of it may be sufficient to establish the practice for which we contend; but when taken *in cumulo*, it amounts to demonstration. Hence the necessity of a careful study of the subject in all its details, to an intelligent and sound conviction of its Scripturality. Although the nature of our work has only allowed of an outline of the evidence which the Bible affords in support of our views, we think we have adduced what is sufficient to assure parents, that in presenting their children to God in this ordinance, and on receiving a little water sprinkled on their upturned faces, by a duly authorised minister of the Word, they are not only complying with a Divine injunction, but that they are complying with it in the very mode sanctioned by God.

We cannot better close this section of our book, than by quoting the words of one whose piety and singular spiritual discernment entitle all his utterances to the respect of the Church. Dr Charles Brown, in concluding his little work upon the subject, says: "'He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.' So may we say, He is not a Christian, who is one outwardly; neither is that baptism (to any saving purpose at least), which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Christian, who is one inwardly; and baptism is that of the heart, etc. It

is possible to be saved without baptism, in certain circumstances—where there is no wilful disregard of Christ's authority and institution. But it is not possible to be saved without the things which baptism signifies, without the applied *blood of Jesus, and the regeneration of the Holy Ghost.* It is possible to be saved without baptism, because the ordinance is not necessary from anything in its own nature, but only by virtue of Christ's appointing it. It is not possible to be saved without forgiveness and a new heart,—indispensable from their very nature, in relation to our guilty and depraved condition before God. It is possible to be saved without baptism. But it is far more than possible—alas, it is too easy, and is happening every day, to perish *with* baptism—to be baptized, and go to the Supper too, and perish miserably after all. Have you been born again, dear reader? Have you been washed in the blood of the Lamb? If not, what can privileges avail save to increase your guilt, and aggravate your doom? Flee, flee, from the wrath to come. Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near. Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain lest thou be consumed."

Part Fourth.

THE CHURCH'S DUTY.

THE RELATION OF CHILDREN TO THE CHURCH.

THE SABBATH SCHOOL.

THE CHILDREN'S PLACE IN THE CHURCH'S SERVICE.

"In the first few centuries of the Christian era, the Church provided for the young of its charge by the Catechumenical schools. Even during the dark ages, from the fourth to the twelfth centuries, Cathedral and Conventual schools, and later, the schools of the Universities, secured at least nominal religious instruction directly from the Church to the young. Indeed, all study of Church history shows clearly, that the Christian Church has never fallen so low, as to formally deny the children's claim to a place in the temple, and a share in its pulpit ministrations, and that where spiritual life has been fullest, there those claims have been most clearly recognised. Children's worship, and Sunday teaching of children by the Church, have had no *beginning* since the days of Jesus."

The Sunday-School World.

I.

THE RELATION OF CHILDREN TO THE CHURCH.

"Every baptized child is, undoubtedly, to be considered as a member of the Church in which he received baptism, until he dies, is excommunicated, or regularly dismissed to another Church; when this efficient and faithful system shall be acted upon, infant baptism will be universally acknowledged as a blessing, and the Church will shine with new and spiritual glory."—*Samuel Miller, D.D., Princeton, U.S.*

THE relation of children to the Church, and the consequent duty of the Church to her children, is a subject of great practical interest and importance. This relationship and consequent duty, as we have seen in treating of Baptism, is very clearly indicated in Scripture. Children are included in the covenant made with Abraham—the covenant under which we enjoy all our spiritual privileges; and hence they sustain still the same relation to the Church which they ever did. Christ and His apostles taught that "of such is the kingdom of God," and that the piety of their parents invests them with an ecclesiastical holiness, which entitles them to its privileges. Farther, as baptism has evidently come in the room of circumcision, and as the apostles baptized households,

children occupy the position of members of the Church.* Circumcision was the initiatory rite of admission to the Old Testament Church—it entitled its subjects to the privilege of observing the passover; while on the other hand even an uncircumcised Israelite, was an excommunicated man (Exod. xii. 48; Ezek. xliv. 9; Gen. xvii. 14); hence we regard baptism as introducing its subjects to similar privileges. Children were evidently recognised as members in the Apostolic Church; both the epistle to the Ephesians, and to the Colossians are addressed to Churches; while in both, children are specially addressed, and urged to obey and honour their parents (Eph. i. 1, vi. 1-3; Col. i. 1, 2, iii. 20). The inference that they were regarded as forming part of these Churches is obvious. Such, indeed, has been their acknowledged place in the Church from its very institution. It is customary to speak of a first admission to the Lord's table, as "joining the Church;" but in the case of all baptized children, Church membership dates from their baptism.

Still, although children are members of the Church, they are so only in a qualified sense. Full church membership, pertains alone to those who make a voluntary profession of faith in Christ. Till a profession is made, they are, as Dr Hodge says, "like citizens under age, with their rights held in suspension. These suspended rights are those of communing, and having their children baptized." Children are then at baptism admitted to all the privileges of which they are capable. The mere unconsciousness, ignorance, unbelief of the child, does not deprive it of Church privileges. The youngest child that lives, enjoys the privileges of citizenship. The whole military and police force of the State

* *See* page 73-86.

guard him from violence, and, if need be, compel parents to nurture and train him in a manner befitting their station: nor is this all, civil law will protect his rights and redress his wrongs. So it is the Church enfolds her offspring, and guarantees to them all the privileges of a Christian nurture. In baptism, not only do parents come under obligations respecting their offspring, but the Church comes under similar obligations. What, then, are the duties of the Church towards baptized children?

The duty of the religious training of the young devolves upon parents and the Church conjointly. We shall, hereafter, remark upon the means to be adopted in the performance of this duty; but for the present observe—

1st, *That the Church is charged with the superintendence of parental instruction.*

She virtually says to parents at baptism, what the daughter of Pharaoh said to the mother of Moses, "Take this child and nurse it for me." Now, here it is our Baptist brethren found one of their most formidable objections to the baptism of infants. "You maintain," say they, "that your children, in virtue of baptism, are members of the Church—where, then, is that superintendence, instruction, and discipline, to which their membership entitles them?" Nor can we deny that the practice of our Church affords some apparent ground for the rebuke. That children should be received to the Church by baptism, and yet be no more cared for than are the children of the unbaptized, is, it must be confessed, a grievous failure in duty. Those acquainted with the religious state of Scotland forty or fifty years ago, know that our fathers were more faithful to their trust. Then, each professedly Christian father was a pastor to his family. In cottage and

mansion, worship and religious instruction, went hand in hand. The Sabbath evening was specially devoted to catechizing and examination, upon the sermons heard in the house of God. Children and domestics took part in these exercises, which undoubtedly did much to promote the religious character of the community. Then, there came the annual visitation of minister and elder, when in each family, inspection was made of the religious attainments of its members. Year by year continually, did the superintendence and instruction go on; and how does it stand in contrast to the indifference of the Church in these days to family religious training!

Here then is call for amendment. We know not of a more promising field for ministerial effort. Why ought not means to be adopted, for a universal revival of family religious instruction? Let the duty not only be inculcated from the pulpit, but in ministerial visitation, let particular inquiry be made as to its performance; and, if need be, let ministers visit the families of their charge, and gathering each household around them, personally institute the service of domestic instruction. A single family visited each Sabbath evening with this purpose, would in the course of a year, do a thousandfold more for the revival of religion, than the preaching of Sabbath evening sermons. Of preaching in this land of churches we have enough; but of parental, patient, intelligent Christian instruction, we have in private, far too little. We know of few sins more pernicious than parental neglect of the religious education of the young. If parents are charged with the duty, the Church is equally charged with the duty of seeing to its performance. If the man who, in temporal things, "provides not for his own, and especially for those of his own

house," is to be treated as one who "has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel;" Is the man who denies to his children the bread of life, to be permitted to pass unrebuked? A faithful inspection of the religious condition of families evidently becomes us, and where neglect is discovered, admonition is imperatively demanded.

2d, *In consequence of the relation of baptized children to the Church they are proper subjects of discipline.*

From the time of a child's baptism, he not only becomes entitled to all the privileges of which he is capable, but amenable to the authority and discipline of the Church. The Church is not only bound to see to the instruction of her young, but also to take cognizance of their life and conduct. How often is the frivolity and profligacy of a child a grief to parents: has the Church then no duty to discharge in such a case? Might not seasonable interposition strengthen parental authority, and save many a youth from the consequences of his folly? Why should a solemn and tender admonition upon the part of minister or elder, be unblessed? Why should not the fact of baptism, and the authority with which it invests the Church, be brought to bear upon consciences not as yet utterly seared? Offence may be taken—the expostulation may be resented; but what of that, if the Church thereby proves faithful to her obligations. The authority of the Church upon the consciences of her members cannot be denied; and upon the tender consciences of the young it must be specially powerful. The very knowledge of the fact, that the Church had her eye upon them would be most salutary.

The question has been asked, whether the Church ought in any case to subject to discipline those who fail on coming

to the years of reflection, to give evidence of piety; or who by their waywardness and frivolity, resist the Church's endeavour to bring them to Christ? The question, evidently, has reference to two different classes. To those who give no evidence of piety; and to those who give evidence of positive ungodliness. With regard to the first class, there is the difficulty of determining upon any particular age, as the limits of reasonable expectation of conversion. God is forbearing, and it seems unreasonable that His Church should be less so. Still, if capable of choice, and if the world be preferred to the service of the Redeemer, why retain in the Church those who are manifestly not of it? Would not the very sentence of exclusion in such a case, be likely to bring the most indifferent to reflection? And with regard to the second class—If we would suspend or excommunicate one who has been admitted to the Lord's table, but who has persisted in a course at variance with the profession then made, why not suspend or excommunicate one guilty of similar conduct, who, although he has not sat at the Lord's table, was baptized in his infancy? The one ordinance as certainly as the other subjects to discipline. If this be not admitted, we must abandon altogether the principle that baptism constitutes Church membership. But even when all direct efforts have seemed a failure, and the sentence of exclusion has been pronounced, the Church can still plead with God on behalf of her baptized ones.

The Church's purity requires the performance of this duty; and equally the salvation of the erring one demands it. The recovery of a lost child—What can equal it! What parent's heart can rest while one so near and dear is still exposed to all the terrors of a broken law—to all the fury of the restrained justice of God. What search can

equal that of a lost child? The search for the lost piece of silver; the search for the lost sheep; the yearnings of the prodigal's father are its symbols; and ought not the Church to join in the enterprise with sympathetic emotion?—"How can I give thee up, Ephraim!" If the Church takes Christ's place in the world, so far as that place can be occupied by another, ought she not to be to the lambs of the flock, all that the Good Shepherd is?

It is very desirable, too, that the baptized should from their earliest years be kept apprised of the relation they bear to the Church. Why ought there not to be as carefully kept a roll of infant as of adult members? Why ought they not to be convened at stated intervals, and addressed as those who were in their infancy dedicated to God in baptism? and care taken, when they withdraw from the Church, to certify them to the congregation with which they may connect themselves. The fact of the full and formal recognition of the Church membership of baptized children, lies, I am persuaded, at the foundation of all successful efforts for the revival of family religion in the land.

II.

THE SABBATH SCHOOL.

"We founded this Church with the distinct understanding and plan, that the Sunday schools should be the main and prominent object of regard. Large numbers from them were gathered to the table of the Lord. Forty-three years have convinced me more and more of their value and efficiency as an instrument of blessing to the Church of God." —*Stephen H. Tyng, D.D.*

THE congregational Sabbath school is the outcome of the Church's love for her baptized little ones—love directed by the Lord's command, "Feed my lambs;" and thus begotten of Christian love and Christian law, it cannot fail of bringing souls to Christ. The day is past when Sabbath schools can be spoken of lightly. As soon may we condemn preaching to children, as condemn Sabbath schools. The one is as likely as the other, to become a substitute for parental instruction. He who said, "Go preach," also said, "Go teach." The Sabbath school, when properly constituted, is simply the Church engaged in the religious instruction of the young. "I have never seen," says Dr Tyng of New York, after forty years experience, "the Sunday school which offered the least rebellion to a fostering Church or a loving pastor; or a Sunday school that did not delight in bringing all its fruits and gains, and in the utmost abundance possible, to the bosom of the Church for its enlargement, and to the heart of the

pastor for his comfort." Hence, the closer the connection between the Church and the school the better.

The peculiar advantages of the congregational Sabbath school as a means of religious education, is, that it so individualises the children of the Church, that each feels that he is the object of attention and interest—that it permits of careful classification, according to capacity and age, and by a spirit of healthful emulation arrests the attention and exercises the faculties. Now, this is unattainable when dealing with children in a mass. The object of the Sabbath school, it may be added, is identical with that of the Christian ministry,—namely, the conversion of souls; and as the minister preaches not for the *future*, but for the *immediate* conversion of his hearers; so the teacher ought to teach not for the future, but the immediate conversion of his scholars. The impressibleness of children is peculiarly favourable to conversion, as we shall show when treating of parental training.

The first thing, then, to, be attended to is the selection of teachers. This duty undoubtedly devolves upon the minister and session, or minister and deacons of each congregation. Its superintendents should be elders or deacons of approved prudence and ability. Such an appointment secures the proper constitution and working of the school. Nothing is likely to be more detrimental than to accept as teachers whoever may offer themselves for the service. Would the head of any mere secular school or classical academy thus act? Would any parent, wishing a tutor for his family, accept, without inquiry, the first who applied for the situation? Those, then, appointed to the office of Sabbath school teachers, ought to be persons of approved piety; and not only so, they should be persons of superior intelligence and

aptitude for teaching. When such men as Dr Arnold of Rugby, and James Halley of Glasgow, have given themselves to the work, who among the most gifted need to be ashamed of it? Arnold, when located at Laleham, said, "I have got the Sunday school entirely into my own hands. So attend to it I must, and will." James Halley was one of the most distinguished students who ever passed through the Glasgow University. When undergoing his Blackstone examination, Sir Daniel Sandford, having in vain tried to puzzle him with every conceivable question, rose, and addressing the excited audience, said, "Gentlemen, I need scarcely say I have never met the equal of this." Yet this student, who was fully a match for an accomplished Greek professor, was a Sabbath school teacher. The last time it was my privilege to meet him, was when, on stepping into a weaving shop in one of the outskirts of Glasgow, on a Sabbath evening, I found him in the midst of a dozen ragged urchins, teaching them the Shorter Catechism. Let the most gifted then be selected for the work. A work to which the Saviour gladly devoted Himself (Matt. xix. 14) may well be coveted by those of highest intellectual rank and attainments. Not the young alone, but those of long experience and richest grace, of best social position and personal influence, should be most forward to enlist in it. And when duly approved, it might be well that they were set apart to the office in the presence of the Church, by services appropriate to the occasion; and when thus set apart, they should be constantly and cordially recognised as servants of the Church. The truth is, that the Church of the future depends upon the Sabbath school of the present. The Sabbath school is to a large extent moulding the Church. Teachers have under their influence the most impressible portion of the Church.

The purity of the Church, the intelligence of the Church, the missionary enterprise of the Church,—is to a large extent in the hands of the Sabbath school. Exercising such an influence then, the Church may well pray for her children and their teachers.

Then, there is the part which the minister ought to take in the work of the school. Many ministers, it is to be regretted, take little or no part in its operations. A sermon to the children once a year, an occasional hurried walk through the classes, is about the extent of the interest manifested. Now, to what is this indifference or aversion to be attributed? It cannot be, that the religious welfare of the young of their flock is unworthy of their concern; or that they have got no time for the duty. The young above all have claim on a minister's care; and as well allege that they have no time for visiting the sick or preparing sermons or conducting Bible classes. Are children beneath a minister's care? The Saviour did not think them beneath His. May they be left in charge of less experienced tutors? Mothers feel that the younger children are, they have the more imperative claims upon their nurture. The first duty of every minister is with the teachers. Unless he sustains with them the most cordial relations, his influence over the school is lost. And as the conductor of a musical band gives time and pitch to the whole, so teachers should be ever ready to take their cue from the minister; but to the accomplishment of this, he must meet with them weekly for the consideration of the class lessons. Few ministers, I believe, but would only be too happy to spend an hour weekly in such an exercise, could the attendance of teachers be secured. It is to be feared that there is in general most inadequate preparation made by teachers for meeting their

classes. Many are apt to rely upon the ignorance and unsuspiciousness of their scholars; but in most classes there are those who easily detect the inefficiency of extemporaneous teaching. The minister who relies for escape from the charge of unpreparedness upon the simplicity or gullibility of his hearers, is not more certain of the contempt of those whose benefit ought to command days of careful reading and reflection. If teachers are not willing to devote much time to the study of the Word of God, they ought not to accept the office. He who is not willing to study carefully the portion allotted to children, is unworthy of the character of teacher; and if he has assumed the position, why not study that portion for the explanation of which those committed to his charge will wait upon him? Unless teachers come to their classes, thorough masters of the subjects to be considered, the Sabbath school can never be the instrument for good which it might be; and such a preliminary meeting would go far to secure this preparation. It was an admirable reply which Dr Arnold made to some one who inquired why he continued to study his lesson over and over previous to teaching his classes: "Because I prefer that they should be supplied from a running stream, rather than from a stagnant pool." The Rev. Mr Arnot, in his interesting sketches on the United States* informs us that, in Chicago, the Sabbath-school teachers meet in a body every Saturday at noon for the purpose of considering the lesson for the following day, and giving to each other suggestions as to its meaning, and the best method of illustrating and enforcing its lessons. "I enjoyed the privilege," he says, "of attending and addressing that meeting. Upwards of two hundred teachers assembled. I

* *Family Treasury*, 1871.

looked with great interest on that large and lively meeting, not only on account of the positive benefit that each teacher may derive from the exercise of the day, but also and chiefly, as a symptom of a great and sustained zeal in Sabbath work already existing in the Christian community." Nor is this devotion to the work misplaced. In no other case is opportunity so full of promise; in no other case is faithfulness so assured of its reward. Teachers misjudge their office who lightly estimate its responsibilities; while careful preparation, earnest prayer, and unflagging perseverance, may give them rank among the best benefactors of our race.

Where it is possible, it is most desirable that the minister himself should superintend the school, or at least be so frequent a visitor to it, as to be thoroughly acquainted with the teachers and their work. Thus the children will feel more impressed with the importance of the school, the teachers will feel that there is at least one heart that is in sympathy with them, and parents will be assured that the piety and the intelligence of the Church are enlisted on behalf of their children. "Almost every Sabbath school," says the Rev. John Todd, "contains hundreds of children in the morning of their being, open to the best impressions, and rapidly forming characters which will abide with them forever. These hundreds of immortal beings are placed in the hands of some thirty or forty teachers, the best probably to be obtained; but all the minister is supposed to know of them is, that they are members of his Church, and are people of common abilities. I ask now, if he would be willing to have as many adults taken from his pastoral charge, and once a-week instructed in religion, by those of whom he knows nothing, except that they are professors of religion? Would he be wise or safe, judicious, or justified

in so doing? I think not. But are not these children as liable to be led wrong, biassed wrong, by any want of judgment or piety on the part of the teachers, as the adult part of the congregation would be?"

If, then, ministers and teachers are so bound to care for the children of the Church, are not their parents equally bound to care for them? It is not enough that they send their children to the school; they ought to see to it, that they regularly attend, and that the lessons are properly prepared. Why not rehearse in the family on the Sabbath evening, the lessons for the Sabbath following? It would not only benefit the children, it would even more benefit the parents themselves. If parents do not choose to study as much of the Word of God, as is prescribed weekly by the Sabbath school for the study of their children, they may renounce all claim to be regarded as Christian parents at all. Is it to be expected that children are to be Bible students, but that their parents are not?—that children are to make themselves acquainted with a few passages of Scripture weekly, but that parents are to live on from week to week without anything like a serious study of the Scriptures? If they plead inability to aid their children in such a work, the necessity of their immediately and persistently engaging in such study is only more obvious. Nothing will so impress a child with the importance of the exercises of the school, as unmistakable evidence of interest upon the part of parents. Your child asks your help, I shall suppose, and you evade the request; can that child fail to be discouraged? Or take another supposition: You delight in rendering your child all the aid in your power, the Sabbath-school lesson is ever on your mind, the commentary is consulted, the prescribed question of the catechism is pondered, proofs for

the doctrine are selected, the mind is full of the subject, and when the Sabbath evening comes, punctual to the stroke of the clock, the family is assembled for the work of revisal: can a child in that case, fail to feel that it is engaged in a momentous work?

The Congregational Sabbath school is not only beneficial to the children, it reacts upon the Church and upon the community. The congregation which maintains a Sabbath school for the children of its own members, has in operation one of the most effective means of sustaining its membership, and the vigour of its spiritual life. Nor can we overlook the fact that each child becomes an evangelist in its own home. The lessons of the school will in some form or other be repeated there. The sermon may fall powerless, or be left where it was heard; but the Gospel lesson, repeated by those most loved, will reach farther than the preacher reaches, and produce impressions, it may be, even more abiding.

III.

THE CHILDREN'S PLACE IN THE CHURCH'S SERVICE.

"Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

"Feed My lambs." "Preach the Gospel to every creature."

Jesus Christ.

IT will be observed that I have hitherto affixed no Scripture texts to the chapters which have preceded, as these have none of the characteristics of an ordinary sermon, but that I have contented myself with appropriate quotations from Christian works of approved excellence. Why, then, in the case of the topic here announced depart from this rule? For this simple reason, that I am acquainted with very little that has been published upon the subject. Of treatises upon Sabbath schools and early religious training, we have no lack, but how little in the shape of book, or tract, or sermon, on "the children's place in the Church's service"—sad proof of the almost universal oblivion of the Church to the fact that they have any right to any place there, whatever. If, however, they have been thus overlooked, by the acknowledged expounders of her principles and order, they have not been overlooked by her great Head. The texts quoted, evince His interest in their welfare, and invest them with a

right to a place and a part in the public services of the sanctuary.

The truth is, as things go, children have no recognised place in the Church service at all. Occasionally a remark may be addressed to them from the pulpit, or a sermon may be preached to them, much as a copper is tossed to an importunate beggar, or starving child; but a regular dispensation of "the children's bread," there is not. Let any one revert to the period of his childhood, and he will remember how he spent his Sabbaths in the house of God —the irksomeness of the service, and the devices employed to beguile the time, the weariness of the sermon, and the sense of relief begotten by the closing of the book, and the psalm and prayer which followed; and with what heartiness he then responded to the Amen;—how he sat there from year to year, without ever hearing a single remark that amounted to a recognition of the fact that children were present. A brother in the ministry once related to me, how his little boy, now a minister, having got heartily tired of the service one Sabbath, stood up on his seat, and addressing his father, admonished him thus, "Papa, do say, Amen!" Few children may be disposed thus to arrest the service, but how many have often wished it were over. Although I was privileged to be brought up under one of the most able and accomplished men that ever adorned a pulpit, I have no remembrance of hearing, during all the years of my boyhood and youth, a single remark in the Sabbath service fitted to interest and instruct the young. Now, is this fair, is it in accordance with the Saviour's command, "Feed my lambs?" does not the charge "preach the Gospel to every creature," include the children? and if they are entitled to all the privileges of the Church of which they are

capable, are they not entitled to have the Gospel preached to them, so that they can comprehend it?

It has even been seriously proposed, that children ought not to attend public worship at all, owing to the evil consequences of their sitting in listlessness, and forming the habit of hearing without attending—the habit of sleeping, inattention, and aversion to the Sabbath and the sanctuary, which may become the habits of life. Any suggestion more at variance with the spirit and design of God, we could not conceive. Rather than shut the children out, let the services of the sanctuary be adapted to their capacity. That the present system, with all its defects, has a most blessed influence upon children, cannot be doubted. There is much in an ordinary Sabbath-day service to interest and benefit the young. There is a crowd, and children are always at home in a crowd; there is the psalmody, and children are fond of singing; there is the administration of baptism, and children have a wondrous interest in babies; there are good habits being formed, and good habits are the safeguards of life. Nor do I so estimate the faculties of children as to suppose that they can sit under a faithful ministry without picking up occasionally what may be useful to them; but how seldom does the preacher show, that he regards it as any part of his duty to interest and instruct his youthful auditors. An able minister, having preached an elaborate sermon, on retiring was accosted by one of his elders, who said, "my dear sir, do be careful, the next time you feed the flock, not to put the hay so high in the rack, that the lambs can't reach it." What a preacher was our Lord! Nothing can surpass His discourses and parables in vivid illustration and attractive power. Were sermons generally constructed after such a

model, nothing more would be required to adapt the Sabbath service to young and old alike.

The fact is, our public religious services require remodelling, so that the children may obtain their own place. We act in this matter as in nothing else. We provide food, clothing, books, education, public entertainments and private festivities, all adapted to juvenile capacity, dimensions, and necessities; but we require our children to attend public worship, and sit patiently throughout its services, while these services are adapted and conducted solely with reference to the capacities and requirements of those of mature years; content that if they are spared to reach maturity, they may then understand and appreciate, what to them at present is little better than tedious ceremonies; and thus the power of the pulpit, the most powerful agency in the education of the human soul, is left unemployed at the period of life most favourable to the reception of abiding impressions. There is in the solemnity of the Sabbath and the services of public worship, that which begets a most docile frame. Children disposed in the family class, or Sabbath-school, to be restless or playful, are here awed to reverential demeanour; and yet this agency so powerful, and this opportunity so favourable to salutary impression, are neither employed nor improved.

Several methods of adapting religious services, so as to interest and benefit the young, may be suggested.

1*st*, An occasional sermon specially addressed to them; not less frequently than once a month. This is perhaps the least satisfactory plan. What would parents think, if the minister preached to them only one sermon each month? Still it would be better in either case than none at all, and a great improvement upon the present state of things.

2*d*, There is the plan of interspersing all sermons with

remarks and illustrations fitted to interest and instruct the young. I know one brother in the ministry (would that all preachers possessed his gifts!) who is ever pausing in the delivery of his discourse, and by some familiar observation, calling the attention of his youthful hearers, to the truth he has been exhibiting. There is, however, this difficulty in the way of *a regular*, or weekly ministration to the young, in conjunction with ordinary sanctuary services: The preacher who would exhibit to his hearers the entire system of Divine truth, must often preach upon themes which are not adapted to juvenile capacity; doctrines must be exhibited, and to deal with Scripture doctrine thoroughly, modes of thought must be adopted, which the fully matured only can comprehend. Still, so far as subjects especially intended for adults can be adapted to youthful capacity, it is well that they should be so adapted. Ordinary Sabbath services then, can only partially be made available, as a direct means of instructing the young, and hence this method must not suffice.

3*d*, I know another brother, who once each month abbreviates the ordinary service, and assembling the children in front of the pulpit, there *catechises* them. Perhaps no better method of instructing could be adopted. It is a thoroughly evangelical mode. Luke tells Theophilus, that he intends to give him an account of those things, in which he had been previously instructed, literally *catechised* or *catechetically taught.* It is a mode of teaching that was practised by Christ. We read of Him "sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing and *asking them questions;*" and on another occasion teaching His disciples the grand fact of His Messiahship by the same method. (Luke i. 4; ii. 46; Matt. xvi. 13-17.) With such a warrant and example,

we may confidently resort to this method of teaching the young. A course of catechetical exercises on the parables or miracles, on Scripture biography or doctrine, on the Shorter Catechism, or the ordinary lessons of the Sabbath-school, might in this way, be most profitably considered, and that without detriment to the regular service of the church.

4th, The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church at Dayton, Ohio, has enjoined ministers to "give at least one-half of every Sabbath service to the children and youth." This seems a fair and equitable arrangement, inasmuch as each class at all the diets of worship, has a portion allotted to them.

5th, The plan which seems the fairest of all, is that of devoting one of the diets of worship each Sabbath to the young. Not, let it be observed, holding a service every Sabbath for the special benefit of such, at a different hour from that of the ordinary service, or in a separate place. Such a mode may do well enough in efforts for the benefit of the neglected children of a community, but the children of the Church stand upon an entirely different footing. A service for the children of the Church apart from their parents, is to be condemned, inasmuch as it isolates parents and children, where for the sake of both there ought to be habitual association. Whatever may be the practice of earthly parents, a heavenly Father has no table for young children apart from his other children; and it is well that such is the order of His house. One of the most hallowed recollections of life, is that of having sat in the house of God, side by side with parents gone. But is it really suggested that we are to give up to the children the fore-noon or afternoon service of every Sabbath? It is. A

sermon need not be *childish*, although addressed to children. What Vinet says of good books, may be equally said of good sermons for the young. "A child's book," he says, "may be a great or beautiful work, and deserve a place of honour in our libraries. Good books for children are the best among the books for men;" and so good sermons for children are the best for all. Manly simplicity will please and profit young and old. The plan has been adopted with signal success. Dr Tyng of New York, has acted upon it for full twenty years, and he says respecting it—"It has been one of the most interesting and effective of my labours in the ministry. The Lord has been pleased very graciously and mercifully to own the work as His in many cases of conversion. I have considered no part of my work more valuable and important than this; and certainly no portion of it so popular and acceptable to others." That the plan shall yet be generally adopted in this country, I am fully persuaded, although it may not be till years more have passed away. Of course, in all these services, it is understood that not only the sermon, but the psalmody and the prayers be adapted to juvenile worshippers.

Nor is it to be overlooked, in thus dealing with the young, that there may be among them the children of God. The fact of early conversion is undoubted. Why, then, should we always address children as if their conversion was yet to be accomplished? May we not be withholding from many, the portion to which they are entitled? In ordinary pulpit address, we have ever before us the fact, that we have believers in our audience. Why, then, should this conviction evanish whenever children become our auditors? Something more advanced than the mere primary principles of the Gospel may be addressed to them—something pertaining to Chris-

tian experience and Christian hope—Christian living, and Christian working. Nay, the fact that in all likelihood in every congregation, there are converted children, ought to impress us more deeply with the importance of giving them their own place in the Church's service.

But, in order to all this, two things are requisite: The Church must be awakened to the importance of the subject, and ministers must be trained to the work. The simple fact that preaching to children is so rare, and so few are known as preachers to children, is proof enough that the Church is not alive to a full sense of her duty to the young. The early Church better understood its duty. We find a Greek hymn of Clement's, of Alexandria, which was sung in the second century, thus expresses the sentiment of the Church in relation to children:

"Shepherd of tender youth,
Guiding in love and truth
Through devious ways.
Christ, our triumphant king,
We come thy name to sing,
And here our children bring
To shout thy praise."

Now, this is a duty which ministers cannot sinlessly evade. The religious instruction of children is the special work of every pastor—it is a work that cannot be delegated or performed by others. The Sabbath-school is most important in its own place, but it must never be regarded as a substitute for the Church service; and yet it has, to some extent, become so. Perhaps not half of the children able to attend church, are present at its service; and no wonder. So long as their presence is ignored, it is not reasonable to expect that it shall be otherwise. In the Sabbath-school they are quite at home—their presence is recognised, the service is

adapted to their capacity, while in the house of God, no special notice is taken of them, and their full attendance is apt to be regarded in a well-let church as an intrusion.

Ministers, too, must be trained for this important part of pastoral work. How common is it to be met with the apology—"I confess I could never preach to children, it's a thing really I cannot do;" and this said as if the inability or dislike, were very good reasons for a neglect of the duty. The man who cannot preach to children may be qualified for many offices, but certainly not for that of pastor. Doubtless, preaching so as to interest children, is to a large extent a natural gift. Some excel in it, just as some excel in public speaking and vocal accomplishments, but all possess it in some degree, and by due cultivation any may acquire the art. Happy are those ministers who are naturally constituted, so as to enlist the friendship, and profitably interest the young. The late Nathaniel Hawthorne was such an one. "If I value myself on anything," said he, "it is on having a smile that children love." Edward Irving was another of the same class. Any one who has read his life must have been struck with this fact. His love of children was one of his most marked characteristics, and hence he was ever a favourite with the young; and this must seem all the more remarkable to those acquainted with the man. That tall, gaunt, almost spectral figure, seemed to belong more to the class of Old Testament prophets, who, like John, lived apart from human society and human sympathies. Perhaps none ever equalled the late Alexander Fletcher as a preacher to children. Those who knew him well, have told me, that the secret of his power lay in the *boyishness* of his nature; he seemed to carry up into manhood all the tastes and feelings of his early years; he loved

children, and would never see them at play without joining in their sports. I have been told that being on a ramble in the country on one occasion, he came upon a group of boys disporting themselves in a river; no sooner had his eye caught them, than, without ceremony or introduction, he instantly divested himself, and plunged in among them. Who has not known some one thus endowed, and not only known him, but felt the power of his gifts.

> "E'en children follow'd with endearing wile
> And pluck'd his gown, to share the good man's smile."

Children have a marvellous power of discerning character; hence it has passed into a proverb, "They are never cannie that dogs and bairns dinna like."

> "Blessings on them! they in me
> Move a kindly sympathy,
> With their wishes, hopes, and fears;
> With their laughter and their tears;
> With their wonder so intense,
> And their small experience."

Our look, our voice, our smile, must all be winning if we would win them. The man who has "a smile that children love," we may trust.

But while some may possess the aptitude naturally, it becomes all who would be pastors to keep alive their love of children, and sympathy with their tastes and modes of thought. Let students in training for the ministry begin early to address children in our Sabbath schools, or Juvenile meetings, and a new and most delightful field of usefulness will open up before them. Let ministers cultivate the friendship of children, that they may understand their habits of thought, their tastes, temptations, and sins. We can

never effectively address any audience till we understand it. If Paul to the Jews became a Jew, it becomes all in the ministry to become again children to those who are children. Let ministers, as they read, and walk, and visit, be ever on the outlook for what will interest and instruct the children; and as they prepare their sermons, let them ever have the lambs in view. Sermons thus prepared will profit alike young and old. If Dean Swift read his sermons to his cook before preaching them, that he might the better adapt them to the most simple, a careful observation of the range within which children think, may the better qualify for profitably addressing them.

The command, then, is obvious; the duty is urgent. We may as soon set aside the command, "Feed my sheep," and claim to be faithful pastors, as set aside the command, "Feed my lambs," and claim to be faithful; the one is uttered by the same voice, and enforced by the same authority, as is the other.

Part Fifth.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

CHILDREN MAY GROW UP IN PIETY.

DOMESTIC CHRISTIAN NURTURE.

THE BIBLE—ITS PLACE AND USE.

MORAL AND RELIGIOUS TRAINING.

DOMESTIC TEMPERANCE.

"In commanding the obedience of his children, the father is ruling their will, and in this light the family is a state of which he is the *sovereign*. In teaching them what to believe, he is cultivating their intellect; in this respect the family is a school, of which he is the Divinely-appointed *instructor*. In pointing them to God, he is developing their conscience; and in this light the family is a church, of which he is the *minister*. Here, then, in the family, are found, existing in the germ, relations and principles which render it both an epitome of society at large, and its origin. Here all those tender charities take their rise, and those holy affections are cherished, which subsequently expand into other homes, and other families, and which constitute the best guarantee of a people's morality, and of a nation's strength."

John Harris, D.D.

I.

CHILDREN MAY GROW UP IN PIETY.

"When can the conscience be reached, if not in childhood? When has God promised that the soul *shall* find Him, if not when He is sought early? When will the Holy Spirit impress the heart which you are labouring to soften and subdue, if not when it is the heart of a child?"—*The Rev. John Todd.*

NO question can exceed in importance the education of the young. The Church and the world twenty years hence will be very much what we choose to make them. Our pulpits and professors' chairs, our offices of influence and responsibility, will be generally filled by those who at present are, to a great extent, subject to our will. We are the child's educators. We may not be the child's parents, or its guardians, or its teachers, or its employers, or sustain to it any special relation whatever, but if it is moving in the sphere we occupy, or if it be within the reach of our means of doing it good, we are responsible for its welfare. It is with parents, however, that I have chiefly to do; and my duty is not only pleasing but promising. What lies nearer to a parent's heart than the interest of his child?

Before remarking upon the nature of religious, or parental

training, it may be proper to notice a fact which is full of encouragement to a performance of the duty. The fact is this, that children may grow up in piety. This is implied in the numerous injunctions which pervade Scripture respecting the religious education of the young, and is confirmed by numerous instances of early conversion.

1st, *The mind in childhood is peculiarly favourable to religious impressions.*

The general opinion seems to be, that the mind must be somewhat matured before it can effectively deal with religious subjects. Now what is this but to say, that a child can grow in depravity when it cannot grow in holiness, and that the faculties of the mind are qualified for vice long before they are qualified for virtue. But is it not the fact that they are capable of the one, just as soon as they are capable of the other? Both Scripture and experience teach that the propensity to sin, if unchecked, grows with our growth. Why, then, not meet the first dawn of intelligence with the corrective and purifying influences of the gospel? Intelligence even precedes language. The first smile of the infant in its mother's face is an intimation that intellect has begun its work. Ere his little feet have touched the ground, he has trod the path of sin or the path of holiness. A child old enough to understand that he ought to obey his parents, is old enough to understand that he ought to obey God. If he can grieve at a father's displeasure, and repose in a mother's love, he is equally capable of faith and repentance. How much does even a child of three years know! We think little of his attainments; how many facts he has mastered; how much he has learned to love and hate, to long for and fear; and is it of no consequence that all this pro-

ceed uncontrolled? Why regard the period intervening between the cradle and the school as unsuitable to moral and religious discipline? Why yield up a period so important to the unrestrained influence of depravity? Or if the propensity to sin be stronger at ten years of age than at five, why lose the advantage which early training affords? We admit that fully to grasp doctrines and creeds, mature faculties are requisite, but truth is not always received by the intellect. Truths may impress, even when they are not fully comprehended. Conversion is accomplished, not by solving some problem, to the solution of which power of intellect is required, but by yielding the heart to God and His law; and what child is not adequate to that? A great practical error has originated in misunderstanding the nature of faith. Because some knowledge is essential to its exercise, and because it may comprehend all knowledge, a knowledge of Bible doctrine, facts and precepts, church creeds and systems of theology; and as all this is beyond the grasp of a child, it is concluded that of necessity conversion must be deferred to years of maturity. But is not faith a thing fully as much of the heart as of the head? Converts in heathen lands, often know less of the Bible than do many of our Sabbath-school scholars. The apostles before our Lord's resurrection knew little of His death and atonement, and yet they trusted Christ. Faith in Christ is more a trusting in Christ as a personal Saviour than any belief of abstract doctrine, and a child is as capable of this as is a full-grown man. Let parents remember, that there are committed to their care, not only those who are capable of profiting by religious instruction, but those whose minds are in some respects peculiarly adapted to the reception of the truth. The imagination in childhood is lively; then the heart is susceptible

the judgment alert, the memory retentive, the conscience tender and readily alarmed by the apprehension of guilt. What is the grand obstacle in those of mature life to the acceptance of the Gospel? The pride of intellect, the love of the world, the power of unbelief; but in the child these have no place. The god of the world has not yet blinded the mind; the deceitfulness of sin has not yet beguiled the affections. Such is the depth of religious sensibility in childhood that even a false system of faith, if early inculcated, will retain its hold and wield a mighty influence to the close of life; hence the gospel missionary finds that he can only successfully cope with heathenism, by the establishment of schools, and the religious education of the young. Preach to a child of the guilt and depravity of the soul and he will believe you. Teach him the divinity of Christ, or the inspiration of Scripture, and neither Socinian nor infidel objections will be urged in reply. Exhibit the doctrines of the cross, and to the mind as yet unvitiated by the sophistries of the world they will be regarded neither as a stumbling-block nor foolishness. I do not assert that the truths of the Gospel, when presented to the minds of children, will invariably receive a cordial reception; but this I will assert, that they will not be met by those speculative objections which are the barriers to the truth in minds of older growth. And even when the presentation of the truth is not effectual to salvation, it may take such possession of the faculties that, in after years, the man will be unable to reject the Gospel to which he assented in his childhood. Why then not sow the good seed ere the enemy sows tares?

Were we able to trace back our moral history, we would, in the great majority of instances, discover that our character for life had been formed before our sixth year. Even

when evangelical influences at a subsequent period succeed in forming the character anew, it may be found, that their work has been chiefly in the way of counteracting habits and principles acquired in early life. Suppose that all the Church's efforts for the conversion of the young should be arrested for the next ten or fifteen years, what an advantage would be thereby given to the cause of evil. Those now in the simplicity and susceptibility of childhood would be found in the vigour of matured depravity. If, then, this would be wrong, culpable, sinful, upon the part of the Church, is it less so upon the part of a parent?

But my child is a sinner, you say, and how can I expect him to begin a right life, till God gives him a new heart? Very true; but the way to get for him a new heart is, to fall in with the divinely-appointed method of procedure. The performance of our part, is ever the way to secure the performance of God's. This leads me to remark—

2d, *That God specially desires the conversion of children.*

This is evident from His entire procedure respecting them. Does the covenant not include "you and your children?" and is not that the pledge that nothing shall be awanting on His part to make them partakers of its blessings? The injunctions addressed to parents are to the same effect: "Train up a child." How? For future conversion? No; but, "in the way he should go, that when he is old, he may not depart from it." Again: "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." That is, subject them to such training as the Lord appoints and approves such training as is fitted to beget in them reverence for God, and obedience to His will. Again: "Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto Me; for of such is the

kingdom of heaven." Such are the words of Christ, and like Himself, they are full of Divine tenderness. The Christian scheme comprehends children in its gracious scope and design. It claims all souls for its dominion—all ages from the cradle to the grave. It not only claims the children, it expresses its most emphatic condemnation of those who do not aid in bringing the lambs of the flock within its ample fold. Again: "This is the will of God, even your sanctification," and are children excluded from the Divine purpose? (Acts ii. 39; Prov. xxii. 6; Eph. vi. 4; Matt. xix. 14; 1 Thess. iv. 3.)

The Bible is full of such indications of interest on the part of God, in the children of His people. It would certainly be singular, if He had in the scheme of mercy no regard to their salvation, or that His design is to give to Satan, the dew, the dawn, the flower of existence, and only claim the maturity of life for Himself. Why, then, should parents not fall in with the Divine intention? Parents it is admitted, are not in general without solicitude as to the religious character of their children; but it has almost solely respect to the future, whereas the best way to secure the future religious character of a child, is to secure it now.

3d, *Children have actually grown up in piety.*

Samuel grew up piously, and that in an age of prevailing ungodliness. John the Baptist was "filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb," and Timothy from childhood "knew the holy Scriptures, which are able to make wise unto salvation;" but they had all been favoured with a pious ancestry. (Matt. xxi. 16; 1 Sam. i. 27, 28; Luke i. 15; 2 Tim. iii. 15.) These are but representative instances. Any one acquainted with evangelical efforts on

behalf of the young, can tell of similar cases. How many ministers of the Gospel—how many Church members and Sabbath-school teachers, are able to adduce well authenticated cases of juvenile conversion. "God," says President Edwards, "God, in this work has shown a remarkable regard to little children; never was there such a glorious work amongst persons in their childhood, as has been of late in New England." "I have more than once," says the Rev. John Todd "had the pleasure of welcoming to the table of Jesus Christ, those who were under twelve years of age." Mr Spurgeon alone admits to his church from forty to fifty children, every year, of whose conversion he has been well assured. The religious press teems with biographies of juvenile Christians, and while making all allowance for the exaggeration of parental affection, they may be generally accepted as truthful narratives. The Rev. L. W. Bacon says: "One of the most eminent and beloved of the pastors of New York city once told me the beautiful story of his Christian experience; how with the earliest dawn of reflection he became conscious of a deep and tender love for the Saviour, and how, although he had had many doubts and difficulties, he had finally settled clearly in the conviction that if ever he had known the grace of God, he had known it from the time of those earliest recollections. A few days after this I met the venerable father of my friend on Broadway, and told him that his son had been telling me the story of his religious life. 'Oh, no, he hasn't,' said the good old man; 'he can't remember that story. Only his mother and myself can tell it. It goes back to his cradle!' Who will undertake to say at what point such a life may not be begun by the inworking of the Holy Spirit?"

Now, facts like these show, how we have wronged the

young, and disparaged the grace of God, by regarding the conversion of children as a thing not to be expected. We have not looked for it, we have not laboured and prayed for it; and hence the instances which have occurred are regarded as exceptionable; but even under all the disadvantage of this culpable neglect of duty, they are sufficiently numerous to show, that if the Church had laboured for the conversion of the young, as she has laboured for the conversion of the old, Christians, after eighteen hundred years' preaching of the Gospel, might not still be in the minority.

4th, *Youthful piety grows to a vigorous and commanding maturity.*

I do not say that it attains to this in childhood. Although warranted to expect conversion in childhood, we are not warranted to expect full-grown piety in children. Juvenile piety will be juvenile in its proportions, just as children are juvenile in their proportions. But it is no ground for discouragement, that our children fail to exhibit the proportions of full-grown men in Christ. This will come in due course. As a vigorous physical childhood lays the foundation for a vigorous manhood, so early piety lays the foundation for a lofty type of Christian character. Nor should parents be discouraged by the backwardness of their children. It is related in the life of Isaac Barrow, that his backwardness in childhood was such that his father solemnly wished, that if it pleased God to take away any of his children, it might be his son Isaac; and yet when the king made that same Isaac a bishop, he declared, he had bestowed the office upon the best scholar in England. What is true of secular learning may be equally true of piety. The Rev. John Todd says of those converted early, "They were like the early, small stars

of evening, very small, but pure and bright and beautiful. They held on their way, too, gloriously. I have not half the fears a converted child will dishonour religion, that I have of the aged sinner, who has lived in the iron habits of sin for half a century will do it. With him it is the work of life and death to break off those old habits. His thoughts, wicked and vile, will ever and anon flow back into the old deep-worn channels. But piety in the child gushes up like the breaking out of a new spring, making its own channel, growing and widening, and beautifying as it flows." "He has been pleased in a wonderful manner," says President Edwards, "to perfect praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings; and many of them have more of that knowledge and wisdom that pleases Him, and renders their religious worship acceptable, than many of the great and learned men of the world; it is they, in the sight of God, who are the ignorant, and foolish children: these are grown men, and an hundred years old, in comparison with them." Mr Spurgeon states that of all he has admitted to the church in their childhood, he has never found one who in after life, disgraced the Christian profession; and we only need to refer to Christian biography to prove that the world's greatest benefactors have been pious in early life.

On the other hand, there is a very close connection between an ill-spent childhood and a fruitless old age. The grace of God may indeed interpose to break this connection and save the soul from disgrace and ruin; but even when this is the case, the unhappy effects of early misconduct remain through life. John Newton was a wicked and dissipated youth, and though by the grace of God he was snatched as a brand from the burning, he felt till his dying day the unhappy consequences of the habits which he had

formed in early life. Still, his case is a striking instance of the benefits of early religious training. His mother, who died before he had reached the age of seven, "stored his memory," he tells us, "with whole chapters and smaller portions of Scripture, catechisms, hymns, and poems, and often commended him with many prayers and tears to God." The influence of this early training survived a season of youthful dissipation, and ultimately issued in his conversion to God.

II.

DOMESTIC CHRISTIAN NURTURE.

"See that he carries in his bosom, wherever he goes, sweet memories of home; of home influences; of home scenes; of home nurture. These may be blessed by God, not only to soothe him with a melancholy sadness in many an hour of sickness and sorrow and desolation, but to keep him true and loyal to the principles of his godly upbringing, true and loyal to the God he was taught to reverence and love beneath a father's eye and beside a mother's knee!"—*Robert S. Candlish, D.D.*

THE whole class of Scripture injunctions addressed to parents, and to which I have already adverted, imply that means are requisite to secure the piety of children. They do not spontaneously accept the Saviour and assume the lovely features of the Gospel. Among the means essential to this end may be named, domestic religion, a right use of the Bible, personal dealings, counsel and discipline. It is to the first of these I at present direct attention.

Home is the principal school in which children are taught, and the spirit which pervades the family becomes the spirit of the child. The principles there acted upon, the temper and character, the gentleness and generosity, the pride or humility, the piety or worldliness there exhibited, are instinctively caught up and assimilated by a law as potent as that by which plants grow. Our opinions, purposes, faith, and hope, become those of the child. Childhood is like a mirror,

ever catching and reflecting the image of surrounding objects, or, rather, like those plates chemically prepared by the photographer's art, which not only catch but retain the image of whatever is presented to it—scarcely discernible it may be now, but in the dark chamber of the human heart to be developed with marvellous distinctness. Each family has its distinctive character, and each child born into that family is born heir to that character. A Mahommedan family is a nursery of young Mahommedans; a Catholic family is a nursery of young Catholics; a heathen family is a nursery of young heathens. One spirit animates all.

And so is it in more favourable circumstances. If the distinctive character be generous, the children imbibe a generous spirit; if it be worldly, they become vain and frivolous. When the uniform sentiment of the household is, that riches or worldly honours are the chief good, that true dignity consists in ranking with the privileged classes, the child is corrupted, and the nobler distinctions of goodness and purity are regarded as of secondary consideration. How can it be otherwise? The child is an imitative being. Children come into the world ignorant and so helpless, that for years they are wholly dependent upon others. Instinctively they grasp the first hand that is held out. The helplessness of the child is the counterpart to the affection of the parent. Love is strong in the one and need is great in the other; affection attracts the parent to the child, and need attracts the child to the parent. Allied with this sense of need in the child is confidence in those around him. Early childhood rejects nothing, resists nothing—whatever is offered is most unsuspiciously accepted. To expect that a child will grow up different from what he hourly sees, and hears, and feels, is to expect what is contrary to all experi-

ence. True, the influence of the school, the Church, and general society, will in due time be felt; but the influence of all these combined, will not equal the influence of home. How evident is the Divine wisdom and goodness in such an arrangement. Had it been constituted otherwise, how helpless would parents have been as agents of good to their children; had children been as early independent of their progenitors as are the young of the lower creatures, the race would have been placed at a more hopeless distance from God and holiness; and how impotent would have been every effort for its moral and religious improvement!

Most important, then, to a child's welfare are the objects and events by which he is surrounded. The sights he sees, the words he hears, the persons he associates with, are all forming his character. Not only must he read of Christ and Christian duty in the books with which he is provided, he must read of them in the temper and words of those on whom he is hourly dependent. The spirit which pervades the house must be a spirit of piety. Mere word-teaching will not suffice. "Do this," and "Don't do that," will avail little. Although the Ten Commandments were every morning rung out as from Sinai, those addressed would begin the day anew in defiance of God. Religion, to be influential, must be seen and felt—seen and felt, not in sanctimonious looks and pious ejaculations, but in a life that breathes the spirit of the Gospel, and carries to the youngest mind a conviction of its sincerity. The soil in which the young soul is reared must be healthful; the light and air and moisture by which it is nurtured must be holy. One of the best elders of our church ascribes his conversion to the simple incident of a tear dropping from his father's eye as he knelt with him at family prayers. It so impressed him

with his father's sincerity, and the reality of religion, that he yielded his heart to God. It is remarkable the extent to which distinguished writers ascribe their piety to parental training. Among these may be numbered Augustine, Bishop Hall, Richard Baxter, Cecil, Doddridge, Thomas Scott. "We are more than half what our mothers make us," says Vinet; "amongst the things that a man may be deficient in, the worst deficiencies are those which his mother alone could have supplied; in general, we owe far more of what is good to our mothers than our fathers; and superior men may have commonplace fathers, but almost invariably their mothers will be found to have been distinguished women."

The influence of a parent, however amiable and exemplary, if not pious, cannot be savingly beneficial. Such influence may beget an attractive character for the world that now is, but not the character which fits for the world to come. How can parents expect their children to trust in Christ when they know that they have no trust in Him? how expect them to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" if they have not yet begun to seek it? If they live without Christ, if they cast off fear and restrain prayer, how can they expect that it will be otherwise with their children? A chain in the hand of a demon, it has been said, would not more irresistibly drag them to ruin than the example of an irreligious parent. On the other hand, can a parent be duly impressed with the great thoughts of salvation without the susceptible nature of childhood feeling its importance? Can the eye of a father kindle with the hope of immortal life without every listening one catching its radiance? The parent, then, who lives without Christ, fails in the chief obligation which the parental relation imposes. Even the ancient Roman had a touching

superstition of holding the face of a new-born infant upwards to the heavens, signifying by thus presenting its forehead to the stars that he was to look above the world into celestial glories. Christianity dispels the superstition, and gives us the clear realisation of that dim pagan yearning. What then shall we say of those nominally Christian parents who do not discover even the heathen's sensibility, and with all the blessed teachings of New Testament revelation, remain content with low and earthly satisfactions? What would we think of the father who cruelly branded his child with a red-hot iron? Would he not be held up to execration? And shall there be no censure for him who makes his child hideous by a more enduring disfigurement? Time might efface the scar of the body, or if not time, the grave shall; but neither time nor eternity shall efface the scar of the soul.

Not only is the happiness of children dependent upon their piety, the happiness of their parents is equally so. Are not children the blessing or the curse of domestic life? How much, then, is involved in the fact of a child's conversion! How many hearts are sad because of irreligious and profligate children. These are the murderers of fathers and the murderers of mothers, of whom we read in Scripture. But when piety is the pervading spirit of the household, love is spiritualised, trials are sanctified, and every blessing is invested with a sweeter zest.

III.

THE BIBLE—ITS PLACE AND USE.

"Every Mohammedan child, who is taught anything, is taught the Koran, from the Straits of Gibraltar to beyond the Ganges: wherever the religion of the false prophet prevails, there the standard of religion is the great instrument of education. The result is what might have been expected. The religion of the land is really the religion of the people. Its influence is diffused through all departments of society, and its spirit and precepts are practically regarded."—*Charles Hodge, D.D.*

IF children are to be fitted for heaven, it must be "through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." The doctrine which saves the man, can alone save the child. The opinion, however, is common, that the Bible is not the best book for children, and hence we have numerous attempts to present the truth in a more simple and attractive form. Timothy's mother evidently did not belong to the class who so view Scripture, for from his childhood he "knew the Scriptures." Indeed the Bible to a large extent is constructed on a plan which renders it most attractive to the young. Its truths are often presented in history, poetry, biography, parable, and miracle; and thus the means are provided of interesting their imaginative nature. Nor are the grand doctrines of the Gospel, even in their abstract form, beyond the apprehension of a child. Who more likely than children to be impressed with the thought of God? of a Being everywhere present, whose

eye is ever on us, who hates all sin, and loves only the good and the true. Ask the theologian what God is, and he will tell you, that He is "a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." Ask the same question of the child, and he will tell you that He is "My Father who is in heaven;" and is not the one answer as Scriptural as is the other? Ask the theologian what heaven is, and he will speak of it as a place, and as a state, of its locality and form, of its experience and engagements. Ask the same question of a child, and he will reply, "It is my Father's house of many mansions;" and is not the one answer as intelligible as is the other? Who more likely than children to be impressed with the loathsomeness of sin, and the justice of condemnation because of it? What beauty in the character of Jesus for their imaginativeness; and how well fitted is the story of His marvellous birth, singular life, and touching death, to arrest their notice and enlist their sympathies. Great as are the difficulties connected with Christ's death to some minds, its most obvious aspect is level to a child's capacity. What more manifestly reasonable, than the idea of one of infinite purity, goodness, and love, bearing the punishment of the guilty and depraved? These vital doctrines lie not within the grasp of far-reaching minds merely, they are comprehensible by even a child. Why, the full-grown man has to acquire first much that is child-like, that he may learn them. What parent assured of this will not fill the waterpots with the water of life, in the hope that Jesus will turn it into the new wine of the Kingdom?

Nor are parental instructions to be limited to doctrine. As moral precepts are even more clearly revealed in Scripture than are doctrinal truths, so they are most easily appre-

hended. Here the indelible law of right and wrong, written by God's own finger on the human heart, comes to the instructor's aid. Let the young, then, be early impressed with a love of truth, and a hatred of all deceit—let them be trained to a readiness to every good work, and a considerate regard to the feelings of others. How numerous and varied are the incidents and examples of Scripture which may be employed for this purpose. By all means teach them Virgil, Cicero, and Thucydides, but forget not to teach them Moses, David, and John; and while they are made acquainted with the manifold laws of nature, forget not to teach them the law which all have violated, and which still abides as the only rule of life. It is all well enough to learn to cast accounts and work out equations, but more important still is it that they ponder the problem, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" If children are taught that God is their creator, let them be also taught to adore and love Him: if they are taught that Christ is a Saviour, let them also know that they ought to love and trust in Him: if taught that the Holy Spirit is the sanctifier, let them be also taught to pray that He may work in them all gracious affections.

The grand question of the day, is the use of the Bible in common schools. To me it seems obvious, that there can be no education, properly so-called, without the use of the Bible. What is education but the development of our moral and intellectual faculties, and such a knowledge of things as best fits us for intercourse with God and our fellow-men? But how is this to be accomplished without the Bible? What code of morals equals that which it presents? How then can a human being be educated, even for the present life, without the daily inculcation of its precepts? But then a

national system of education is a system enforced by State authority, or, in other words, by carnal weapons—weapons which Jesus has disowned, as at variance with the principles of His kingdom. How then are we to have national education, comprehending a teaching of Scripture, without the employment of an agency at variance with the spirit of the Gospel? If we protest against teaching religion by a State Church to the old, how can we consistently allow of the teaching of religion by a State school to the young? If the Protestant may, with State money, teach his views of Divine truth, why may not the Catholic, with State money, teach his? Both alike contribute to the State treasury. Are we then to escape from the difficulty by a legal prohibition of the use of the Bible in all national schools? My own opinion is, that while it would be wrong to teach the Bible by Act of Parliament, it would be equally wrong by Act of Parliament to forbid the teaching of it. My recommendation would be—Let the Bible alone, and the common sense and Christian feeling of the country will continue to give the Bible its own place in our schools. It has a place in the school as it already exists, and who needs fear its expulsion? Who would deny to the Bible the freedom allowed to other books? Are the works of heathen poets, historians, and moralists to be used as instruments of education, and is the Bible to be discarded? Before I can believe that it will, I must witness a greater declension of godliness than what has yet occurred.

But whatever question there may be, as to the use of the Bible in the school, there can be no question as to its use in the family. So soon as a child can understand, he should be made familiar with Bible truth. And when is this instruction to be imparted? I answer, whenever the oppor-

tunity presents itself—when you go out, and when you come in; when you sit at the table, and when you walk by the way. "Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little." While it is the duty of the parent on every day to avail himself of all proper opportunities for the religious instruction of his offspring, the Sabbath presents special opportunities, and special means should on that day be employed.

Many parents are no doubt deterred by the difficulty of determining what course to adopt, and the means of conducting it with efficiency. There are, however, helps enough at hand, and these are such that all of ordinary Christian intelligence may make them available. Various courses of instruction may be adopted, such as the following:—*The leading biographies of Scripture*, comprehending the lives of Moses, Joseph, David, Paul, or, above all, of Christ. Aid for such a course may be found in any commentary of Scripture, but of those most easily secured, mention may be made of "Barnes' Notes," and the "Portable Commentary," by Jamieson, Brown, and Fausset; and Pinnock's "Catechism of Scripture Biography." *The miracles or parables of our Lord* constitute courses singularly attractive to children; or if *a course of doctrine* is preferred, the Shorter Catechism, with Paterson's or Struthers' explanations, will be found serviceable. As to catechisms for children, say under six years, the one by the late Rev. Joseph Hay of Arbroath, or "Harry's Catechism," which consists of answers in the language of Scripture, may be used with advantage.

My own method is to call together my household at a stated hour each Sabbath evening, and, having sung a few verses of a psalm or paraphrase, take the scheme of lessons issued by the Sabbath-School Union, and go over the lessons

specified for the evening. These consist of a portion of Scripture, which is read; a doctrine or duty to be proved; a few verses to be repeated from memory; and the answer to a question of the Shorter Catechism. On each of these lessons, remarks are offered, and the service is concluded by myself reading a portion of Scripture and offering prayer. It is desirable that the whole service occupy less than an hour, and that it be rendered useful and interesting by careful preparation; the leisure of the Sabbath affords the time, while such books as those mentioned afford all needed help. The parent who adopts some such plan is not only doing good to his children, but much good to his own soul. Indeed, we could not suggest a better means of promoting personal religion than these preliminary preparations.

The manner of teaching is of equal importance. Fenelon advises that we should not only tell children that the Bible is interesting, but make them feel that it is so. And we know of no better method of parents accomplishing this, than by cultivating Christ's manner of teaching spiritual truth. A vine, a flower, a bird, a blade of grass, were the simple objects by which He taught. From these He discoursed of God, of Providence, and salvation, and that in words so simple that children might have learned. A distinguished minister relates how that his father excelled in the art. In distributing the meat before him at dinner, for instance, he would accompany each portion by some memorable remark. "There, Willie," he would say, as he handed the choice morsel of a lamb's tongue to his youngest child; "there, Willie, is a tongue that never told a lie." The mother of Doddridge evidently possessed this gift. Her teaching little Philip Scripture lessons from the Dutch tiles in the chimney, is a happy instance of it. The illustrative mode is peculi-

arly adapted to children, and the Bible provides ample materials for it. The whole truth of Scripture might be taught by means of Scripture illustration. The incident, for instance, of Christ calming the storm, if dwelt on in simple language, may afford a more impressive proof of His divinity than any mere abstract statement of that doctrine. Mr Venn says—"The great danger is from surfeiting children with religious doctrine or over much talk. Doctrines they are too young to understand, and too frequently talking wearies them. Many parents err in expecting the religion of a child should be the same as their own. I did not give formal instructions till they were eight years old, and then chiefly set before them the striking facts in the Old Testament, or the miracles in the New. I also laboured much to set before them the goodness of our God in things which they could understand, such as the comforts we enjoyed together. Watching providential occurrences, I made use of them to give a body and substance to spiritual truth. One method used to affect them much—carrying them to see an afflicted child of God rejoicing in tribulation, and speaking of His love. To this day they tell of one and another whom they saw happy, though poor and in pain."

But while the illustrative mode is peculiarly adapted to children, it is not without its danger of abuse. Anecdotal preachers are not generally the most effective or useful, not because illustrations are improper, but owing to the tendency of presenting only the sensational, the unlikely, and sometimes, it is to be feared, the untrue. Often they are far-fetched and over-coloured. No more has a teacher a right to deal in counterfeit stories than he has to deal in counterfeit coin. Instead of accepting as true all that is printed or orally narrated, read and listen in the daily intercourse and

business of life. There is interest enough in all that is visible, in all that is transpiring, to give point and impressiveness to religious teaching. It was thus that Jesus observed and taught. The most natural object, the simplest occurrence, served his purpose. Never was teacher more simple and natural, and never was teacher more memorable.

IV.

MORAL AND RELIGIOUS TRAINING.

"Many professors teach their children to go in a road of hearing, reading, and repeating sermons, and joining in constant prayer, when all proveth but customary formality, for want of some familiar, serious, wakening speech or conference interposed now and then."—*Baxter.*

THE mere education of the mind, even in Bible truth, is most inadequate. As the moral and spiritual transcend the intellectual, so does the education of the soul surpass in importance all else.

1st, *There should be personal dealings with children as to their souls' salvation.*

"I have seen," says the Rev. Andrew Bonar, "an aged person, struck as with an arrow, on being solemnly asked face to face, 'Have you been born again?' and so I have seen a child strongly moved by such a direct appeal, though before listening only playfully." I remember how the late Rev. Dr John Campbell of London, when I was privileged to spend some weeks at his house, was wont at family prayers to pause as he read the chapter, and naming one of his children, would call his special attention to the truth which it taught. Richard Cecil relates how his mother would speak to him on the matter of his soul's salvation, and how he would blaspheme, and how, on getting beyond her reach, he would weep at his wickedness. Richard

Baxter ascribes his conversion to his father's faithful dealings with him. Some may, indeed, feel, as did Leigh Richmond, "an insurmountable backwardness to close personal conversation" with their children. "When I begin," says he, "they are silent, and it is not long before I also feel tongue-tied." In consequence of this difficulty, he commenced and carried on a correspondence with his children. Thus ingenious is Christian parental affection, when it is spiritually earnest in gaining its object.

There is this advantage possessed by a parent above all others. He is the only teacher who can teach with authority. The preacher may illustrate and commend truth, but it is a parent's prerogative to control the child's opinions. No power of one finite mind over another can be more complete. But it has been objected, that to control the opinion of a child is to interfere with his freedom as a moral agent. This objection is urged by Baptists on the one hand, and by infidels on the other. It is thus the Baptists put it, in condemning the practice of infant baptism: "This practice does great injury to the child, for with a name, a creed is imposed on the infant, while it is incapable of judging what is right. Thus the mind is early prejudiced, and becomes enslaved to certain opinions and practices." The objection, however, will not bear investigation. Children will be taught, if not good, certainly evil. Human life is a school, and its teaching begins with the first dawn of intelligence. The devil, the world, and the flesh are ever forward to proffer their services. If parents do not teach their children truth, others will teach them error; if they do not teach them morality, others will teach them vice. Why, then, should the child be left a prey to evil? Even where Christianity is unknown or disowned, parents control the

religious belief of their children. The infidel, the drunkard, the profligate and dishonest man, all control their offspring, and mould them to their own vicious character. Are they at liberty to teach them what is wrong, and is the Christian parent not at liberty to teach his children what is right? or, as Mr Barnes remarks: "A man who does not pray, is teaching his children not to pray; he who neglects the public worship of God, is teaching his children to neglect it; he who does not read the Bible, is teaching his children not to read it. Such is the constitution of things, that it is impossible for a parent *not* to inculcate his own religious views on his children. Since this is so, all that the Bible requires is, that his instruction should be right." "Thewald," says Coleridge, "thought it very unfair to influence a child's mind by inculcating any opinions before it should have come to years of discretion, and be able to choose for itself. I showed him my garden, and told him it was my botanic garden. 'How so,' said he, 'it is covered with weeds?' 'Oh,' I replied, 'that is because it has not yet come to the age of discretion and choice, hence weeds, you see, have taken the liberty to grow, and I thought it unfair in me to prejudice the soil in favour of roses and strawberries.'" In many things parents are expected to teach their children. Were children left to the freedom of their own will, how many of them would submit themselves to the discipline of secular education? If, then, a parent has a right to educate his child for the world that now is, why not for the world which is to come?

2d, *Parents, I repeat, are to counsel, and if need be, restrain their children.*

Children are prone to evil—the first exercises of the un-

renewed heart are invariably sinful. Their desire for happiness or pleasure is peculiarly strong, and in their inexperience they are not over-scrupulous as to the means of obtaining them. In youth the moral sense is comparatively weak, and hence there is a danger of yielding to wrong, in blindness to its enormity, or to the consequences to which it leads. There is, too, in the heart a love of freedom, a desire to be independent, which exposes to peril. It was the wish to be as gods that ruined our first parents. Now, the boy especially, feels that manliness requires him to think and act for himself. Here, then, is a state of things, requiring the greatest vigilance and discretion upon the part of parents. Especially are these requisite upon the part of parents in the great centres of population. Who needs to be told that there are in every large city, haunts, where vicious practices, specially attractive to the young, are indulged, where decency is discarded, and the lowest passions gratified? I have been informed by a magistrate of this city, that many of the youth of both sexes are indulging in practices and acquiring habits such, that were any popular outbreak to occur, it is doubtful if there is in the city power adequate to its suppression, without a great sacrifice of life and property. It is only too evident, that many, on emerging from childhood, set at defiance parental authority, and recklessly abandon themselves to the pursuit of pleasure. Far am I from commending a system of irksome restraints, which can only provoke rebellion, and render even religious duties distasteful. What I would commend is, to allow reasonable freedom in what is proper, and to insist on unflinching denial in what is wrong. Think of Eli; think of David. They, doubtless, instructed their children, and prayed for them too, but they restrained them not, and hence the foul sins

which disgraced their families. "Train up a child in the way he should go," is the Divine injunction. Not in the way he *would*, but the way he *should*, implying the exercise of control upon the part of the parent.

Chief of all is it deplorable, when parents, instead of curbing youthful waywardness, sanction and connive at it. A mother, I shall suppose, a professedly pious mother, thinks that it will be to her daughter's advantage that she should see something of fashionable life. So the highest interests of her child are imperilled that she may obtain distinction. Vanity is nourished; dress, beauty, accomplishments are extolled, as if they constituted the crowning excellence; education is moulded, simply that she may excel; and all relish for those duties on which happiness and character mainly depend is displaced, by a silly and sinful frivolity. What an under-estimating of human nature, when a child is looked upon as you would look upon a mine of lead or golden ore, from which so much metal is to be wrought! We talk of materialism. Is there any materialism more degraded or degrading than this? Could a parent act a part more at variance with parental responsibility and a child's real welfare?

3d, *The training of the young to participation in works of Christian usefulness, and the habit of generous liberality, is most important.*

The demands upon the personal efforts of Christians, and their contributions to missionary and benevolent enterprises, will undoubtedly be greater in the future than they have ever been. The Church is evidently girding herself for her work; the conflict between light and darkness is about to be waged with genuine earnestness; the question now is,

shall the Church gain the world, or shall the world vanquish the Church? The means of conquest are at her service—shall she accept them? The answer is already given. To meet, then, the requirements of the age, our children must be directed to nobler aims, and qualified for their attainment. And wherein does this training consist? There must pervade the home circle and the Church, a spirit of lofty enterprise and generous liberality. Children imbibe the spirit amid which they are reared. As certainly as physical qualities are transmitted from parent to child, do children imbibe a generous or a parsimonious spirit. A Church that cares for nothing but its own comfort, or a family whose entire energies are directed to worldly success and high social position, will beget Church members and children accordingly. A single, money-grasping, hard-fisted man of influence in a Church, even although he be a pious man, will leaven the entire membership with his manners, and demoralise that congregation for a century to come; and a father of parsimonious, niggardly habits, will transmit his miserliness to the third and fourth generation. Let the family and the Church then be generous, if they would prepare the coming generations for the requirements of the times.

But is this all? May not children, even while yet children, be embarked in works of Christian usefulness? You may explain the manner of any handicraft; but unless your auditors "put to their hand," all such prelections will be vain. It is in *doing* we become efficient for good. What then is it children may do? They may join *the Band of Hope*, and enlist others in the cause of temperance; they may join *the Sabbath school*, and bring their companions with them. An American writer tells how a girl, who lived

as a "little maid" in a rich but irreligious family, brought one child after another, till the whole family, parents and all, were brought to church and school. Or they may act as *tract distributors;* few would refuse a tract presented by a child; as soon could we resist an angelic messenger. Most substantial is the aid which children have rendered the cause of missions, in the capacity of collectors of *the Juvenile Missionary Society:* the withdrawal of their collections would be a serious diminution of the Church's power.

Chief of all, *they ought to be trained to contribute* to the cause of Christian well-doing. It is not enough that the children's names be entered in the books of the missionary collector, and regularly paid out of the parent's purse. They should rather be taught to *earn* or *save* money, *subscribe* and *pay* themselves. The work is thus brought directly home to them, and they feel personally interested in it. Children specially are not likely to fail of interest in what they pay for; by this method they are habituated to giving, and will thus readily respond in after life to the appeals of Christian charity.

An instance of parental training which occurred more than thirty years ago, comes up vividly before me. I had been sojourning at the house of a revered friend—a true mother in Israel. We had been at church, and were purposing returning in the evening to hear a sermon on behalf of missions. When dinner was concluded, ere withdrawing from the table, the object of the sermon was introduced, and the subject of contributing suggested. The mother, addressing each of the children in their order, put to them the question—"What will you give?" Various sums had been announced in reply; but on coming to her boy James, no response was forthcoming. "So, then, James,"

said the mother, "you give nothing; for giving to be accepted by God must be *cheerful*," and having said this, the question passed on. The matter dropped, but on the way to church, James came alongside of his mother, and catching her by the arm, whispered in her ear, "Mother, I'll give a fourpenny." Conscience, under the influence of judicious parental counsel, had been at work, and had brought up from the pocket of a warm-hearted, cautious boy, a very fair contribution to the evening's collection. Thus it was, that this generous-hearted woman transfused her own spirit into her children, and fostered in the Church of which she was a member, a spirit of liberality which is felt to this day.

Such is an instance of domestic training in Christian liberality; take now an instance illustrative of the effect of such up-bringing. William M'Gavin, well-known as "the author of the Protestant," was the son of an Ayrshire farmer; his parents were most exemplary members of "the Secession," and liberal beyond the generality of those in their station of life. Their children were taught not only "to fear God," but also "to keep His commandments;" and among the commandments, the injunction, "to do good" was specially commended, as of the nature and evidence of the Christian life. Much might be expected of children thus trained; nor was expectation disappointed. The entire family attained distinguished positions, both in the Church and the world. William early gave indication of the generosity and ability which ultimately secured for him the chief place in all Christian and benevolent movements. His widow informed me, that while a boy, he longed to express his love of God by at least once dropping a silver coin into "the plate" as he passed into His house on the

Lord's day. Copper by copper was carefully laid aside, and when the requisite number was secured, he with great gratification exchanged them for a sixpenny piece, and with greater satisfaction still, added the piece to "the weekly offering." Not only was Jesus that day "sitting over against the treasury, beholding how people cast money into the treasury," the elder in attendance was struck with the fact of a silver sixpence dropping amid a plateful of coppers, from the fingers of an apprentice boy; and Jesus put it into that man's heart to open up the way to the youthful donor, for a distinguished career of Christian usefulness. From that day, as he told his wife, he never was without silver money for a good cause. Ere long he obtained employment in a mercantile office, and ultimately rose to be a partner in the concern. His generosity and Christian activity kept pace with his success in life; widows and orphans became the cherished objects of his care; missions, schools, and tract societies received his liberal support. Few Sabbaths passed without some village congregation enjoying the services of "the merchant preacher;" the abominations of popery specially roused his indignation, and never perhaps has the Man of Sin found in a layman a more formidable opponent. The same dip of the pen which transferred a thousand bales of cotton to other hands, not unfrequently finished a paragraph of the "Protestant," on the weekly issue of which, multitudes all over the country waited with never-flagging interest. Having through a generous accommodation of a friend lost his entire fortune, "Oh, Willie," said his wife, casting her arms around his neck, "I'm right glad to hear it; now I'll get you on the Sabbath to myself." His money being gone, she calculated on his being henceforth obliged to stay at

home, as on all his preaching excursions he defrayed his own expenses. "I have been," said he, "like a channel through which money has flowed; sometimes thousands have been in the course of passing through, and sometimes only shillings; but to me it mattered little which it was, as I feel I am responsible only for what God gives me, and no more." And now if any of my young friends should, when in Glasgow, pay a visit to the Cathedral, let them remember to look across the ravine which separates the burial ground from the steep and rugged hill beyond, and they will perceive on the summit an elegant monument, surmounted by a statue of Mr M'Gavin, erected by the citizens to the memory of him, who, when a boy, longed for the pleasure of dropping silver money for once in "the plate" on the Lord's day. How true is it, that, as is the boy, so is the man! The habit of giving is to a large degree a matter of education, and those habituated to it in early life, will feel little difficulty in exercising it in after years. Were children trained after the model of the Christian household to which I have adverted; or encouraged to do as did William M'Gavin, there would be no stint of funds for the Church's operations.

4th, *No system of Christian training can be effective without prayer.*

Some parents are most exemplary in this respect: they not only counsel their children apart, but pray with them apart. Surely none can make the endeavour to instruct, direct, and restrain, without a consciousness of inadequacy? From God alone can we learn how to do it. Christian education reaches depths of the soul which mere ordinary every-day teachers seldom attempt to fathom. Enough for them

that they develop the faculties of the mind, and store the memory with useful facts. The Christian parent, however, deals with the heart, with a heart, wholly inclined to evil; and who can regulate and sanctify it but He who holds all hearts in his hand? What a comfort to a Christian parent then, that there is One who can create the heart anew, and that He encourages all such to depend upon his aid. Christian parents, we cannot doubt, pray for their children; but do they pray with faith, earnestness, and importunity?

The reach of this subject is of wider extent than mere personal or family interests. Most sacred are these; but not only does the welfare of families depend upon a faithful system of religious training, the welfare of the nation and of the world are equally dependent upon it. The true source of a nation's power, is in the piety and discipline of the families which compose it. A nation's prosperity and order are more dependent upon moral and religious principle, than even upon wise and just laws. However excellent its laws, in the absence of moral principle, it will be liable to collapse on the first civil commotion. Let parental authority be relaxed, and family discipline and training neglected, and no genius of statesmanship, or vigilance of police, or valour of armies, will prevent national demoralisation. Here, then, national reformation must begin. The value set by God upon the religious training of children is attested by the fact that in His most significant interpositions on behalf of our race, provision has ever been made for it. It was so, with the first family in Eden: then were the destinies of a race committed to the great father of us all. It was so when the race had been all but destroyed by the flood; to the hands

of Noah its momentous interests were once more committed. It was so, when God chose from all the families of the earth the family of one who would "command his children, and his household after him, and who should keep the way of the Lord." It was so when Jesus was born: His holiness is ever presented as the pattern of juvenile piety, and His filial reverence and submission, as the obedience which becomes all children.

Let all, then, charged with parental responsibilities, make the family the power for good which God intended it should be, the bulwark against vice, and the stronghold of virtue, which religion can make. The signs of the times beget in the mind of the most thoughtful, grave apprehensions as to the future. Infidelity on the one side, and Romanism on the other, like two apocalyptic monsters, wait and watch, ready "to devour the child as soon as it is born;" while error,

> "It's legions, angel forms,
> Thick as autumnal leaves,"

start up at every step, and all around, pre-occupy the mind and divert the unstable to the ruin of their souls. Now, then, is the time for every friend of God and man, to guard well the fountain of national life—now is the time for the young—a consecrated host to rush between the living and the dead that the plague be stayed.

V.

DOMESTIC TEMPERANCE.

"Resolve at once, by God's help, to shun everything that may prove an occasion of sin. It is an excellent saying of good old Bishop Hall, 'He that would be safe from the acts of evil must wisely avoid the occasions.' Never hold a candle to the devil. He that would be safe must not come near the brink of danger. He must look upon his heart as a magazine of gunpowder, and be cautious not to handle one spark of temptation more than he can help. Where is the use of your praying, 'Lead us not into temptation,' unless you are yourselves careful not to run into it?"—*The Rev. J. C. Ryle.*

THE world is full of temptations, and none are more formidable than domestic drinking customs In many families every unusual event is celebrated by drinking. A birth, a marriage, or a death, are occasions for free indulgence. Among the first lessons which the child is taught, is to overcome its natural aversion to alcohol; and ere it has gone to school, it has learned to prefer wine to water; in our paying and receiving visits, at dinner, or when entertaining friends, the wine decanter is deemed indispensable. We have sat at dinner-tables both amused and disgusted—gentlemen looking across the table, and bowing and saying, "The pleasure of drinking wine with you, madam," or "The pleasure of drinking wine with you, sir," when the real pleasure seemed to consist in *titillating* the palate with alcohol. It is told of a member of Congress, that being at the American Presi-

dent's table about the time the custom of using basins of tepid water, after dinner, for cleansing the fingers, was introduced, and not being aware of the purpose for which the water was designed, rather than betray his ignorance he drank it. The servant, thinking it a good joke, brought him an additional supply, and as no other conceivable application of the water suggested itself, he sent it after its predecessor. The servant observing that the gentleman's thirst was not apparently satisfied, brought in basin No. 3. The joke had, however, run its course, and with a look expressive of unutterable feelings, he said, "Do hand it to my friend over there, as I perceive he has got none yet." What would reasonable men think of a custom like this? How absurd to drink tepid water after dinner! How much more absurd, then, to drink not only tepid water when thirst is satisfied, but drink it when it has been rendered pernicious by the addition of the poison of alcohol!

It is not, however, so much the absurdity, as the danger of such customs, that we are desirous of exposing. In their observance, the appetite for liquor is originated; they constitute the school of drunkenness; but for their existence, intemperance would have no place among our social vices. Few or none ever began the drunkard's career but in drinking company. Here it is, that the relish is acquired; and the appetite once formed may attain commanding power.

Wine and spirits are most insidious agents; yet what so apparently harmless when draped in all the attractiveness of friendship and fashion! The direst evils are, however, sometimes concealed under most specious appearances. Lord Byron informs us, that by far the mildest manners he ever met, were those of the blood-thirsty and remorseless

Ali Pacha; and that the most civil gentlemen he ever conversed with, helped to relieve his pocket of its purse before the interview terminated.

> "There is no vice so simple, but assumes
> Some mark of virtue on its outward parts."

The danger of intemperance lies in its almost imperceptible approaches. Youth suspects no danger, in the sparkling beverage which quickens all his susceptibilities of joy; the invalid sees it not, in the cordial which revives his enfeebled frame; the lover of social pleasure, dreams of no danger amid the merriment of the social board; nor does the man of piety for a moment suppose, while talking of the success of the Saviour's kingdom, that by sipping wine, he is giving strength to the obstacles which oppose it, or tarnishing the lustre which adorns it. The danger of intemperance, I repeat—lies in its almost imperceptible approaches. The quantity of alcohol which the stomach will at first receive is small, and must be rendered palatable by the accompaniments of water and sugar. Raw, undisguised spirits would at first be rejected: the whole system rises up to repel the invader. The quantity which an old toper will take with perfect impunity might prove fatal to a beginner. But the human constitution is possessed of such a power of adaptation, that ere long the stomach will crave what it would formerly reject; and that desire for stimulants, proclaims that its integrity has been destroyed, and that its innocence is gone. The extent to which the taste can be thus gratified, is the measure of the injury which has been inflicted. Now, how easily is all this accomplished! The entire physical organisation may not only have adapted itself to the presence

of a hostile agent, but this agent may now be essential to its comfort; and he who has been the subject of this momentous change, may have been as unconscious of the process which was going on, as the child is unconscious of his increasing stature. Who shall determine the smallness of the quantity of liquor in the use of which there is no possible danger? Professor Miller, in his work on "Alcohol," tells us of a lady, regarding whom he was consulted, and the beginning of her drunkenness was the habit of holding strong spirits in the mouth as a cure for the toothache.

I am aware, however, that many suppose education will constitute a safeguard amid all the dangers of which we speak. While it is admitted that education engages us in pursuits, and opens to us sources of enjoyment which to multitudes are unknown; and that these pursuits and enjoyments, may so satisfy our natural thirst for pleasure, that we are preserved from the debasements to which the illiterate abandon themselves; it is equally true that even education and high intellectual culture, constitute no safeguard from the dangers to which we have adverted. What a host of brilliant names, in every department of literature, may be appealed to in support of our position! I need not tell of Pitt the great son of the great Chatham, sitting at table, the candles burning blue, gravely and even thoughtfully employed in collecting the wine-glasses, and piling them one upon another as high as they could balance, and then, with the fragments of the desert, pelting them to pieces? I need not tell of Keats, the poet, covering his tongue and throat as far as he could reach with cayenne pepper, in order to appreciate, as he said, "the delicious coolness of claret in all its glory." I need not tell of Sheridan, drinking with Campbell,

the poet, at a tavern till four o'clock in the morning, and then walking home to his residence, in the full court dress in which he had appeared at Madame de Stael's in the forenoon, his long sword clattering on the pavement, his cocked hat rather awry on his head, followed by a mob of admirers, and pelted with cabbage stumps and the offal of the streets. And yet we are told that in education we are to find the safety-lamp with which we may descend into the dangerous atmosphere of moderate indulgence!

The fact which brands moderate drinking with great inconsideration, if not with heartless cruelty, is that it exposes the weak to a danger which the strong alone are able to resist. If there is a weak lamb in the flock, that is the one to which the shepherd's care is most specially directed; if there is a weak child in the family, that is the one over which parental affection most tenderly yearns. Now, it is to this generous instinct of our nature I appeal. Moderate drinking, instead of guarding and sheltering the weak, exposes them to jeopardy.

Children are its victims. Moderate drinking is a domestic indulgence, and what gives pleasure to parents they cannot refuse to their offspring. Hence, at the family table, juvenile tippling is indulged with parental sanction and approbation. Lisping infants are heard asking for wine, and the hand of a mother nurtures the appetite that is yet to break her heart. Oh, the foul injury that is thus inflicted on unsuspecting childhood! In Christian homes, parents are doing a work at which the devil smiles.

Potent is the influence of home: intimate the connection between manhood and early years. During the period in which the character is being formed, the child knows no kingdom but his father's house; the angels on Jehovah's

footstool look not more submissively to Him that sits upon the throne, for a law to direct them, than does a child regard the sentiments and practices that receive the sanction of fireside approbation, as the rule to guide him in intercourse with the world. Would you even now see the future warrior? mark the boy whose countenance glows as the tales of military achievements are recited with approving eloquence; would you see the future angel of mercy to many a desolate home and cheerless heart? mark that little girl who even now sympathises with a noble-minded mother's benevolence; and would you look on the future tippler—he that will prefer the society of boon-companions to that of wife and children, and the tap-room table to the domestic hearth? mark the little fellow who enjoys a puff from his father's pipe, and relishes the sugared little drops from his father's glass.

Now, it is this far-reaching influence, allied with domestic drinking usages, that sends forth from almost every family a drunkard. Trace the evil up to its origin. There is a family party assembled; father, mother, brothers, sisters, friends, and little ones; nothing but the voice of mirth and kindness is heard—the song, the jest, the commingling of social affection. And is there danger here? True, the glass is circulating, but then its contents are little more than *tasted.* Yes, there is danger. Harmless as the enjoyments of these happy ones may seem, the most deadly work is being done; an influence unseen and subtle is wreathing itself like a powerful serpent around the affections of these young hearts, and bringing them under a most degrading bondage. Are children not being there taught that it is safe and fashionable to drink, while an appetite is being originated and cherished which may yet bring a dark cloud over the scene now so bright, and sink to hell those now so fair

and promising? When this awful result is realised, parents often console themselves with the thought, that wherever their children contracted the love for liquor, they never received from them any example, but that of the most moderate indulgence. Never can we forget the saying of a weeping sister. We had called to see a young man, who was recovering from a fit of *delirium tremens*. There he lay, the wreck of as kindly a nature as God ever made, a bankrupt in business, excluded from church fellowship, and forsaken by his young wife and his infant children. As we withdrew from the affecting spectacle, a sister, unfailing in her attachment to him amid all his profligacy, said, "Ah, sir, but it is a comfort that he never saw drunkenness under his father's roof!" With a sorrowful heart we pondered the saying, "He never saw drunkenness under his father's roof!" How many are deceived with it! To become a drunkard, it is not necessary to see drunkenness. Only allow children to drink, only let them see it used and commended at home, and when they go abroad into society, conforming to its insidious customs, apply the instruction they have received under the parental roof; and between the sanction of home and the mistaken kindness of friends, an appetite may be originated which all the remonstrances of friends and respect for character may not be able to counteract or subdue. The appetite has been secretly gaining strength, and now comes out from its concealment too powerful to be destroyed by those who called it into being.

The infatuation of parents in relation to this matter is most extraordinary. More than one, within the circle of my own acquaintance, have banished their sons from their homes, rather than banish moderate-drinking practices from their table. I remember sitting at the table of a friend,

where the wine flowed freely. Opposite to me sat his eldest son, a youth of twenty-two years of age. He had just returned from abroad, whither he had been banished by his father on account of his intemperance; and there sat that same father, giving his countenance to the practices which ruined his boy. The father is since dead, and the son, a profitless outcast, is boarded with a family in a remote part, where liquor is not easily obtained. Who shall depict the woes which this foul evil has brought upon happy homes? Sons who might have been the pride and solace of parental affection, blighted in character and of bright prospects a wreck; daughters, accomplished and loving, bereft of woman's loveliness and self-respect, resorting to the meanest shifts to gratify an insatiable appetite, and at last perishing in circumstances which respect for survivors forbids narration; wives denied even the command of their own house, and made the subject of constant espionage, as if they were intent on perpetrating some horrid deed; husbands and fathers, the disgrace and not the dignity of their families, tolerated but not revered, a burden and a shame, their death dreaded and yet longed for. Did delicacy permit, it were easy to fill up these outlines with tales of wretchedness and dishonour; and who that has known aught of life is not qualified to give a similar recital? Nor are these cases to be found among the low and the illiterate only, but in the homes of your lawyers, and merchants, and clergy. Such are the fruits of domestic moderate drinking practices. Who, then, is at liberty to say that he may drink with impunity? What angel has lifted up the curtain of the future, and revealed to you a paradise of domestic bliss unmarred by the serpent's trail? Even were parents sure of their own continued sobriety, have they made a covenant with the demon that he

will spare their offspring? Were there to come up from the desolate dwelling, the prison, and the grave, those whom strong drink has ruined, and confront their betrayers, would not many a ghastly child confront an equally ghastly father and mother, as he traced his mournful history up to the mistaken kindness of a parent's table? And yet those who, like myself, have protested against drinking usages, are to be stigmatised as unsocial, peculiar, righteous over much; and that by those whom the demon has scourged! Can infatuation go farther than this?

The young are born total abstainers, and it is very easy for them to remain so. The great difficulty in getting older people to become abstainers, is the liking they have acquired for liquor; and then some will say, "We cannot join your movement and abstain: personally, we don't care for either wine or whisky, but we have friends who take these liquors, and we cannot treat them unfriendly when they visit us." By joining early we may acquire such convictions upon this subject as will easily dispose of such objections. No child is born with a taste for strong drink. I remember an abstaining minister telling me, that his boy about twelve years of age once came to him, and begged that he might be allowed just to taste whisky. "Well," said the father, "you may, if you promise not to swallow it." There was no necessity for requiring such a promise, for the boy had no sooner tasted the liquor than he spat it out, expressing his amazement that people could part with their money, starve, and make fools of themselves, for anything so abominable. It is related of Prince le Boo, that on seeing on board the ship which brought him to England, a man in a state of intoxication, and being informed that wine had done it, could never thereafter be persuaded to put the glass to

his lips. Nor is this noble spirit utterly dead in the hearts of the boys of our own day. I know a little fellow, who is at present attending a boarding-school in England, and who was so shocked with the way in which some of the other boys abused themselves with beer and wine, that he went and took the pledge. When visiting his father's house, his sister, a few years older, came to me and requested that I would enrol her as an abstainer. No doubt she so requested me, that she might be able to strengthen her brother in his resolution, and preserve him safe amid the dangers of boarding-school life. What renders the act all the more worthy of notice is, that neither of their parents are abstainers, and that this young lady has reached the time of life when fashion and social custom exert their greatest power. While our boys and girls discover this discretion and generosity, we shall not despair of the success of our cause.

A few days ago I again visited this happy Christian dwelling, and learned that a younger brother had gone to the same school, and that he too had joined the temperance ranks, and that both on returning home to spend their holidays, had exhibited to their parents their temperance-pledge cards, as if they were the most prized proof they could adduce of their good conduct and educational success. Who can doubt that abstinence is to these boys a mighty safeguard amid the temptations of English school life? An instructive incident occurred since their return. A big surly neighbouring dog one day set upon their tiny pet terrier, and seized him as if he had been a rat, and having almost shaken the life out of him, carried him to the sea with the evident design of completing the murderous deed by drowning; but at this stage rescue was brought the

helpless victim. Tenderly was the lacerated animal laid on the lawn; and while the household stood around, anticipating a fatal issue, the happy thought was suggested to the elder boy that wine might be beneficially employed. A small quantity of sherry was accordingly administered, and as the white eye gave place to the one which betokened returning vigour, the hope was freely expressed, that a much-prized life was likely to be preserved. "There," said the wise administrator of alcohol, addressing an audience in that state of mind best adapted to the reception of truth, "there is the proof of the advantage of abstinence; had that dog been a tippler, the sherry would have done him no good, but being an abstainer, the stimulus has its proper effect." And the highest science could not have given a truer utterance. There is a bright future, we hope, awaiting the boy who could thus speak and act.

Such is the legitimate place and power of alcohol. The recovery of that dog illustrates a great physiological principle. The animal constitution is provided with latent energy to be called forth in the time of emergency; but the frequent or habitual use of alcohol destroys this energy,—in fact, so exhausts vitality, that when the emergency comes, the stimulant has nothing to act upon; hence it is that abstainers far more generally recover in such circumstances, than do drunkards, or moderate drinkers. A friend on being seized by fever was visited by the late distinguished Professor Alison. Among the questions asked was, "Do you take spirits?" "I am an abstainer, sir," was the reply. "Then your abstinence is your life," said the doctor; and my friend's recovery was doubtless more indebted to his temperance, than to the highest medical skill. Who, then, can doubt that one who has been from his birth an

abstainer, and whose nature is unvitiated, is not only more likely to resist successfully the temptations of life; but to combat successfully the epidemic, to which so many succumb, or to survive those accidents to which all are exposed?

Those who adopt the practice of abstinence early, are likely to attain to the greatest stability. The Duke of Wellington once said, that to make a good soldier you must begin with the boy. All his associations, and habits, and tastes must be military; and so those who would excel in any department must begin early. The trees which grow best are but small when they are planted; and those Christians who attain the most commanding stature give their hearts early to Christ. In like manner the best abstainers are those who have grown up abstainers from their childhood. The reason is obvious. One of the chief causes of a violation of the pledge, is the tyranny of the appetite for liquor; hence when no such appetite exists, temptation is more easily resisted. This be the boys' sentiment and song:

Boys, let's stand firm,
Whate'er betide us;
Toiling up life's rugged height:
Let no power on earth divide us
From the way of truth and right.

Boys, let's stand firm,
And God will help us
When temptations gather round;
Look not on the sparkling wine-cup—
Dash it, dash it to the ground.

Another reason for boys and girls joining the temperance movement is, that they make most effective advocates of temperance. Many parents have been led to consider the

claims of the movement, and adopt the practice of abstinence through the influence of their children. Some years ago, when engaged in pastoral visitation, I entered the house of a member who was a stranger to me. I was ushered into a parlour which presented indications of comfort and refined taste. There at one end stood a piano, and at the other, was a well-furnished book-case, while several good pictures adorned the walls. The mother of the family was a woman of comely appearance and superior manners. Ere long I learned that theirs was a temperance family, and as the good lady evinced more than usual interest in our cause I inquired as to the circumstances which had led them to espouse it. "Some years ago, when residing in Glasgow," said my new discovered ally, "one day a friend called; we were much among those who were fond of liquor; I gave my girl a shilling and told her to fetch a bottle of porter." "Mother," said the child, "we have spent a shilling on drink to-day already, and father is not pleased when the money is done." "Run, girl, and never you mind that," was the reply. "But the child's remark went to my heart," continued my informant. "Very suddenly, our only boy that night sickened, and before the morning he was dead. The remark of my lassie and the death of my boy set me a-thinking, and I proposed to my husband that as drink had never done us any good, so soon as the remains of our boy were beneath the ground, we would be done with it. He agreed, and from that day we abstained. As we had not been drunkards, we did not think of joining the temperance society; but soon after you came to Glasgow to preach a temperance sermon. We went to hear you. In that sermon you showed that the sober as well as the dissi-

pated ought to take the pledge. We took your advice, and on coming to Edinburgh joined your congregation. My husband at the same time started business on his own account. Many told him that if he did not 'treat,' he would never get on. 'Then,' said he, 'I can go back and work as a journeyman, but drink I won't.' He stood firm, and prospered beyond our expectation; and you may learn something from one fact. Before we became abstainers we, with difficulty, paid £5 a year for house-rent; now we pay £17, and have something in the bank to the bargain." Such was this woman's story. It is ten years since she told me it. The family continue to prosper, and they owe their prosperity, under the blessing of God, to the simple remark of a little girl, to whom a needless expenditure of money for strong drink seemed unbecoming.

What might not juvenile abstainers do for those verging towards intemperance? We cannot find access to the firesides of all our homes, but children can. The presence of an abstainer always acts as a salutary restraint upon social indulgence. Who then could drink freely in the presence of their children, protesting by their abstinence against the practice? And were all the children of the land to lift up their voices against drinking practices, our home life might be quieter, but richer by far in the exhibition of those affections on the purity and strength of which domestic happiness must ever depend. We call upon the boys and girls, then, to employ the influence which God has given them, in wiping away the reproach of Scottish intemperance.

What I would specially recommend is, that parents practise total abstinence, and give the cause the benefit of

their influence by joining the Temperance Society. No law of God or man requires them to drink alcoholic liquors, and where there is no law, there can be no transgression. Surely there are snares enough in the pathway of life, without parents contributing to foster the most insidious temptation ever created by man or devil. What right have I to countenance practices which may ensnare those dearest to you? And what right have you to countenance practices which may imperil me and mine? No device can afford the young a greater protection from these evils, than the Band of Hope, or Juvenile Temperance Society. They enlist the young on the very threshold of life, and ere the seducer has ensnared them by his wiles, warn them of danger, and establish their goings in the paths of safety.

Part Sixth.

DEATH AND SALVATION.

DEATH AS IT RESPECTS THE CHILDREN THEMSELVES.

THE DEATH OF CHILDREN IMPROVED.

"Oh, happy children, ye who were laid hold of by the Redeemer and appropriated to Himself, before ye could apostatize like your wretched brothers and your unhappy sisters, who have broken the household covenant and abjured the family's Saviour! Then, said I to the father and mother as they wept: Your children who have died are a better portion to you than those who live; weep for the living, and not for the dead: it is the living you have lost; the dead are safely reserved for you."

William Anderson, LL.D.

I.

DEATH AS IT RESPECTS THE CHILDREN THEMSELVES.

" An infant soul, the sweetest thing of earth,
To which endowments beautiful are given,
As might befit a more than mortal birth ;
What shall it be when, 'midst its winning mirth
And love, and truthfulness, 'tis borne to heaven ?"

THE death of children is a common occurrence, indeed, a large portion of the human family die in childhood, for death reigns over them who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. Some may regard the death of a child as a trivial event. Those who do so, have either never experienced the trial, or are destitute of the finer feelings of our nature.

What, then, becomes of those dying in infancy? God, doubtless, can do no wrong, and it might be sufficient to rest in the assurance of His rectitude and love; but as He has been pleased, in some measure, to meet the inquiries of the bereaved, it is proper to indicate what it is He has revealed.

1st, *An early death exempts from much evil.*

Who shall estimate the troubles which beset life? "Man is born to trouble." Far are we from asserting that the course of life is a course of unmingled evil. To the young, especially, it presents itself in the most attractive colours. Their blood is warm and their hopes ardent; the world seems all they could wish, and why should they not make it theirs? Nor are their views of life altogether false. Childhood is happy, and youth is happy, and manhood is not without its joys; but the flowers which adorn the path often fail to bear fruit—golden promises which beguile to betray. Take the testimony of one who ran the full round of pleasure, and drank at all its streams. He longed for wealth, and he got it; honours, and they were laid at his feet; splendour, and he was rewarded with the pomp of a throne. The difference between Solomon and our worldlings is this; he succeeded, while they generally fail, and yet what is even his verdict—"Vanity!"

Even life at its best estate is a life of mingled good and evil. Grant all that can be claimed for the Christian life on earth, still "to depart and be with Christ is far better." So long as a Christian is in a body of sin and death he must suffer. He may have his hours of peace, and even joy, but how sure are they to be succeeded by days of grief. From all, then, that can afflict, early death delivers. Had that young life been prolonged, how soon would its beauty have faded, and its joy been exchanged for grief; but—

> "Now, not a sullying breath can rise
> To dim its glory in the skies."

2d, *Early death exempts from even greater evils than earthly sorrows—It exempts from temptation and sin.*

Who that knows life, knows not the temptation to sin

which besets it? Did our children, when gamboling around our chair, or nestling in our bosom, start up in all the hideousness of matured depravity, who among us would not tremble and grow pale in the presence of his own offspring? Or were there given us a vision of the future, and we saw those we loved most, involved in error, and made wretched with scepticism; betrayed into excesses, and repenting with scalding tears; wasted and haggard with care, living without God, and dying without hope;—did we see all this, how would our hearts sicken with anguish! We know not what might have been the course of our departed children had they been exposed to the allurements before which so many have fallen. The life so prematurely arrested, what know we, but that it might have become a life of shame? How often has the profligacy of children brought down a parent's hairs with sorrow to the grave? Indeed, perhaps, there is no instance in which children go astray, but the parents wish they had been removed by death in infancy. Nor can we doubt, there are instances in which parents recall with bitter regret, the time when the erring one was laid low with sickness, and when they prayed, but with sinful importunity, for their recovery. Hush, ye fathers and mothers in Rama; what know ye but that for the grave which conceals your darling, family disgrace would have been yours, and much guilt that of those who are gone? We thus speak, not that we believe, that all who die in infancy would have thus strayed had they lived, but the fact that they might, may well evoke an "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

3d, *Those who die young are early admitted to the joys of heaven.*

We base this conviction not upon their fancied innocence.

According to Scripture, "we are born in sin;" we "go astray as soon as we are born, speaking lies." Abundantly evident is it, that we are polluted in the very source of our life; with the first dawn of reason depravity discovers itself. We rest, then, the salvation of infants solely upon the atonement of Christ, and the work of the Spirit. In deducing Scripture evidence on behalf of the doctrine of infant salvation, I notice—

First of all, the remarkable interest which God is represented as taking in children. Most significant is the fact, that, when reference is made to them in Scripture, it is uniformly of an encouraging character. "Children," says David, "are an heritage of the Lord;" that is, His own peculiar and chosen possession. Did He not spare guilty Nineveh for the sake of the children that were in it? Parents, under the Old Testament, were commanded to teach their children the Word of God when sitting in the house, and when walking by the way; and, under the New Testament, they are commanded to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." And He who never performed an unmeaning act, or spake an unmeaning word, called to him a little child, and set him in the midst, and said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven;" and then He added, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." Now all this was said of children. Grant that it had special reference to those of childlike dispositions, surely with a child in the midst, and a child as the pattern, it must have had equal reference to

children themselves. On another occasion, Jesus took little children up in His arms and blessed them, while to those who would have kept them from His embrace, He said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Only once do we read of Jesus being angry, and it was when He addressed these words to those who would have hindered parents from bringing their children to Him. This declaration seems conclusive as to the salvation of infants. Some would evade the force of the text by asserting, that He meant to say that heaven consists of persons of a childlike disposition. But they were children that were brought to Him, infants, as the original has it, and there is only reproof in His words when we understand Him as saying, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." Where would be the point of His words did we read, "Suffer little children to come unto me, for heaven comprehends those of a childlike disposition?" Only upon the supposition that children are in heaven is the language consistent, pointed, and beautiful. Nay, it has been thought, that as only comparatively few adults believe and are saved, while all dying in infancy go to heaven, the population of heaven may be mainly composed of children, "of all nations, and kindreds, and people." What a light does such a thought shed upon the dark regions of heathenism, and what a significance does it give to the words "of such is the kingdom of heaven!"

Our Lord, on hearing the children singing in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David," said to the chief priests and scribes, who were greatly offended at this outburst of juvenile enthusiasm, "Have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou has perfected praise?" Could a more conclusive assertion be uttered?

Satan hath exulted in the blasted beauty and early death of children, but Jesus has confounded his boasting by receiving them to His "Father's house," and introducing them to a more glorious life than that which has been denied them here. But perhaps the most striking instance of this tender care for the young upon the part of Christ, is in the touching scene in which He deals with Peter because of his sin in denying Him, and restores him to the discharge of his ministerial duties. Having received from the penitent apostle the declaration, "Yea, Lord: thou knowest that I love thee, He saith unto him, Feed my lambs." Here, then, is a most significant proof of Christ's care for the young of His flock. Think of Him risen from the dead, and just about to ascend to glory, remembering and providing for the spiritual need of children. (Ps. cxxvii. 3; Jonah iv. 11; Deut. vi. 7; Eph. vi. 4; Matt. xviii. 2, 3, 10, 14—xix. 13, 15—xxi. 15, 16; John xxi. 15.)

If, then, the Saviour stood to children in a relation so interesting, while on earth, can we refrain from realising the picture of children in heaven, and Jesus in the midst, or catch the sound of their praises, as amid the glories of the New Jerusalem, they sing "Hosanna to the Son of David?"

Nor can we overlook in this connection, the merciful character of God. We are told that He is gracious, slow to anger, pitiful, and full of compassion, that He is not only merciful, but that He delighteth in mercy. We read, too, of His tender mercies, that He is the Father of mercies, that His mercy is great above the heaven, and that it endureth for ever. Now this characteristic, taken in connection with the cost at which He exercises it,—He spared not His own Son that He might bestow mercy,—

affords further ground of hope concerning those who die in infancy. As God is merciful, and as there is a sufficiency of merit in Christ's atonement for all, on what ground can we despair of such? We can understand how God cannot dispense mercy to the finally impenitent. Their rebellion and impenitence forbid Him; but no such obstacle presents itself to the salvation of those who have "done neither good or evil." The damnation of infants is at variance with Scripture representations of the character of God, and at variance with the doctrine of an all-sufficient atonement. There is not a hint in Scripture, that perdition is reserved for any but actual transgressors. Vengeance is theirs alone, who wilfully reject the Gospel, and are enemies to God by wicked works. In all the references in Scripture to the last judgment, and the final state of men, condemnation is represented as being pronounced solely for actual transgression. Men are to be judged "according to their works," and those "works done in the body," which is equivalent to saying, that it is for actual transgression men are everlastingly punished. The grand, the damning sin, is unbelief. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Children will not then be found on the great day among those who have rejected the Son of God. What know we but that they may be the best welcomed of all who enter the heavenly world? Who can suppose that our God is one who could snatch a child from its mother's bosom and consign it to the flames of hell? There is not a hint in Scripture that He ever does so, but not a few intimations that He takes children from their mother's bosom to lay them in His own. Our God

is not a Moloch, but a Being whose name and nature is Love.

How many instances do we read in Scripture of infant piety,—Samuel, Abijah, Jeremiah, Timothy, and John the Baptist. We know not what may be the mode of Divine operation with regard to such. But may we not conceive of infants being unconsciously made the subjects of renewing grace, through their federal relation to Christ, just as they have unconsciously become depraved through their relation to Adam? Surely Adam's sin cannot be more effectual to pollute, than Christ's righteousness is to cleanse? The fact of an unconscious grace is not more extraordinary than an unconscious depravity. He who created Adam in the very beginning of his being, with a nature as pure as His own, and gave His Holy Spirit to John while in his mother's womb, is manifestly adequate to all the requirements of the case.

While Romanists and Puseyites hold that "without baptism none can enter the kingdom of heaven," and consequently that the great majority of those dying in infancy are lost, the Evangelical or Protestant Church has very generally adopted the more liberal and what appears the more Scriptural view, that of such literally is the kingdom of heaven.

II.

THE DEATH OF CHILDREN IMPROVED.

"Smitten friends
Are angels sent on errands full of love.
For us they languish and for us they die;
And shall they languish, shall they die in vain?
Ungrateful, shall we vex their hovering shades,
That wait the revolution in our hearts?
Shall we disdain their silent, soft address,
Their posthumous advice and pious prayers,
Senseless as herds that graze their hallowed graves,
Tread under foot their agonies and groans,
Frustrate their anguish, and destroy their deaths?"

AS the present life is a probation and a discipline, and as every event in the providence of God is appointed with respect to this fact, it is reasonable to conclude that the death of children constitutes a grand means of conducting our probation to a happy issue. A consideration, then, of the ends aimed at by God in thus trying us, and of the spirit that becomes us under the trial, may conduce to our profit.

1st, *The first duty to which the death of our children calls us, is that of resignation.*

Perhaps the most striking and beautiful instance upon record of resignation under such circumstances is that of the Shunammite woman (2 Kings iv. 8-37). The home of this

woman had been honoured as the occasional abode of the prophet Elisha, but sweeter than even his passing visits was the birth of a son, the only child of his parents, and born to them when they were well stricken in years. Life had for these parents a new object, and there was in their dwelling the light and gladness of childhood. "And when the child was grown," says the narrative, "it fell on a day that he went out to his father to the reapers. And he said to his father, My head, my head." Perhaps it was the hot glare of an oriental sky, or, as we would call it, a sun-stroke which smote him. Carried to his mother, he lay on her knee till death came to his relief; and then she stretched him on the prophet's bed, and hasted to Mount Carmel to tell the man of God of her sore bereavement. As she went, Gehazi, the prophet's servant, met her, and to his kindly inquiries, "Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with thy child?" she answered, "It is well!" Gehazi might understand the language in its ordinary acceptation, but it had to her who uttered it, a far different import. The death of a child has to a mother, a special bitterness. It is hers by many a hope and fear. In her bosom it found its first resting-place, and although its lovely form lies mouldering in the grave, it is still cherished there. Its unfolding beauty hourly rejoiced her heart; its smiles were more than a reward for all her care; its prattle was as music to her soul. And yet here is a mother bereft of the object in which all her affections centred, saying, "It is well!"

Now this language, although most becoming, is most remarkable. How seldom does a parent thus situated really feel that it is well. The first impulse is to murmur, or, if the bereaved get the length of saying, "We must just submit," they feel as if nothing more became them. But is such

language the expression of resignation? Great is the difference between being reconciled to our lot and being resigned. The season of trial is always a season of temptation. How apt are we, for instance, at such a time to harbour hard thoughts of God. "Others have not been so dealt with." "What has this little one done that it should be so smitten." "Why give me one so worthy of love, only that I might rejoice for a day and weep for ever?" Such may be the utterance of nature, but sanctified reflection will beget another spirit. It was God who gave us these children. For what purpose did He give them, and for what intent? Certainly because He loved us, and for our good. Why then did He take them away? Not with a different purpose, surely. Did He give in love and remove in wrath? Had He done it in anger would not the stroke have fallen somewhere else? Oh the sparing mercy of God, that it was thy child that sickened and died, and not thyself! That little one never provoked God as thou hast done. Who would fret because his child had surpassed him in the possession of grace. Why, then, fret when He takes advance of you in glory? Can we call that death which transfers an infant soul to heaven? To such the pangs of dying are unknown. The thought, too, that it was God who did it may silence every murmur; but faith must be strong to recognise the fact. If we had seen the worm at the root of Jonah's gourd, we might have failed to see Him who sent it there. We see Him in battles and in storms, but fail to see him in the falling leaf or infant death. And yet not more certainly did God send Jonah to Nineveh than that He "prepared a worm" to smite his gourd. The death of a child may be a painful touch, but it is the touch of a Divine hand notwithstanding.

How gladly would we welcome Jesus to our homes did He revisit our world; and chiefly because of the little ones who are there! How would we carry them forth as He passed on His way, that His shadow might rest on them, and that He anew might put His hand upon them and bless them. And did He wish to take them with Him, would we not gladly surrender them to His care and nurture? This, then, is what He has done for all whom He has received to His Father's house. He has filled their minds with truth and their hearts with love. What parent would recall them if he could? Suppose two children, equal in age, and playmates from their infancy. Under Christian nurture they become the subjects of Divine grace, but the one dies in early life, while the other lives through the full term allotted to man; which of them is most highly favoured? The one called hence in childhood has enjoyed some seventy years of the heavenly life, associated with saints made perfect, with angels who never fell, and with Christ himself. Heavenly means of grace through all these years have been enjoyed, while from everything that retards Christian progress there has been a blessed exemption. Holy influences have been permitted to operate with all their native force upon the soul. What views of God and salvation have been obtained, what bliss has been experienced! But what of the other left behind to battle with the world, and through much tribulation enter into the kingdom? and when he does enter it, how far inferior may we suppose him in bliss and beauty compared with the companion of his infant days? The same in age, no doubt, when computed by the natural life, but seventy years between them, when computed by the heavenly.

How may considerations such as these, reconcile the bereaved to the death of their little ones! Some may say

it is easy to preach resignation, but it is hard to practise it. There are those, however, who have both preached it and practised it. The late Dr James W. Alexander of New York, thus writes to a Christian brother, "More to disburden a throbbing and full heart, than to communicate much good, I write unto you. I know you will feel a pang when I tell you that this afternoon, at 3 o'clock, God was pleased to take away my little Archibald, our Benjamin, the son of our hopes. His last moments were sweet, he simply fell asleep, no pang, no distortion; he lies like a lovely, smiling marble. He was two years, four months old. Twenty hours illness. A little before his death he clasped his hands, and said, 'I want to say my prayers.' Judge what we feel, my dear friend; the tears I poured in torrents over his dying form were tears of joy; blessed be God for it! Never had I such faith of immortality. My wife and I yielded with a composure for which we cannot be thankful enough, to the resumption of the precious gift. We have been in the practice of giving up our children to God every day. Oh how I rejoice in this, as I found his precious hand turning to clay in mine. I wish to learn the lesson of this dispensation. I wish to be more entirely consecrated to the work of God. If God write us childless (an awful word now, once it seemed a trifle), I will try to find children in the Sabbath-school. Oh my friend, I have a dear child in heaven—only a few hours in heaven. Is not this an honour, a joy, a triumph? let me then determine to lead a heavenly life here. When shall we use this world as not abusing it? When shall we who have wives, live as though we had none? A little while, and all these shadows shall fly away, and we shall find ourselves amidst the realities of eternity."

2d, *An immediate and almost an invariable effect of the death of children upon Christian parents and others, is a wonderful enlargement of affection and sympathy.*

Adversity is often more profitable than is prosperity. The effect of bereavement, for instance, is to add greatly to our power of sympathy. He who sympathises with me in my trial, must have trod my path, and borne my burden. One who has done neither, may speak to me words of comfort, and I may feel that it is kind for him to do so; but he cannot understand my case, and assure me that he shares my grief. How does the loss of some dear one enlarge the sphere of our observation, and give us an interest in cases similar to our own. Or if it has been our lot to be misrepresented and maligned, how we are qualified thereby for taking the part of others so treated!

Now the loss of children begets a similar enlargement of the affections. "When a child is gone," says Mr Beecher, "(and you know it is always the sweetest one that goes, whichever one it is; for death heightens every colour, intensifies everything, and when a child dies, we instantly find that that was the most precious of all the children) —when a child is gone, what a new and sacred solemnity is in the house! Tell me, father and mother, when you lost one of your children, did you not turn the very next day to those that were left, with an intenser feeling of love toward them? Was there not a solemnity in your relations to them that you had never felt before? Did not your whole family seem to group itself right up before the gate of heaven? Did you not see, streaming through your children, light from the world beyond? And from day to day, and from week to week, and from month to month, did not God bless that little child's departure to you, by

diffusing over your household a feeling that made your household more solemn, more sacred and deeper, than when you had all your children an untouched, unbroken band?"

A Christian brother, who was recently bereaved, described to me, how the dispensation seemed to augment his love for wife and remaining children; and how that, now when he is able to view the dispensation calmly, it seems to have increased the value of every object on which his heart was set an hundredfold.

"I look back upon my own experience," says Mr Beecher, "(and I suppose, in my way, and according to the measure of my nature, I have suffered as much as anybody could in the loss of children—I ought not to say in the *loss* of children, but in their *transplanting*), and I am conscious that it has been a blessing of God to me. My life has been made richer and deeper, and tenderer; I have been more fitted for my ministration among you; I have been a better man and a better citizen, than I should have been, but for the taking from my sight my little children. And it has had this additional effect (and I suppose the effect is the same upon all), that the whole realm of childhood seems to belong to me. The memory of children gone makes all children seem sacred; and everybody's children come more or less within the purview of your sympathy or your Christian hopefulness."

Even children, in the time of bereavement, realise with a distinctness altogether new, the realities of the spiritual world. How many can date their first decided religious impressions from such a dispensation. Recently, a friend was bereaved of an infant child, and as the household walked softly under the overshadowing cloud, family grief

and faith, found expression in these beautiful lines, from the pen of a sister just emerging from childhood :

"It was in spring's last days,
Before the sun of summer shone ;
Before spring's cold, chill, piercing breath
Had yet quite gone,

"Upon the threshold of our happy home,
A veiléd angel came—
Tears ran adown each sadden'd face—
'Twas Death that was his name.

"Beside our darling boy he stood,
And said in voice both sweet and low,
'The Lord hath need of thee, dear boy,
And we must straightway to Him go.'

"Then as he took the child,
And turned aside to go,
His hand did gently draw the veil,
And we who saw Him so,

"Said, then, 'It is the Lord !'
No King of Terrors He,
But the Saviour come for His little lamb,
That he might with Him be.

"Then up into His arms,
Our darling one He took,
And turned adown into the shade,
And crossed the little brook
Called Death ;
And so our little boy
Arrived safe at our Father's House—
The home of peace and joy."

Who can doubt, in view of family grief so finely expressed, that even children may profit by such dispensations ? When young hearts, crushed by the stroke of death, send forth a·

fragrance so sweet, it must be good for the whole household which is thus afflicted.

3d, *The death of children may be regarded as an admonition to impenitent parents to prepare for their own death.*

The instances are not rare in which ungodly parents have children who died in infancy. Unconverted father, would you readily abandon the hope that your child is gone to heaven; but if ye believe that your child is in heaven, why continue ye on the broad road to hell?

> "Our God, to call us homeward,
> His only Son sent down,
> And now, still more to tempt our hearts,
> Has taken up our own."

That child was dear to you, inexpressibly dear to you. Can you then bear the thoughts of an everlasting separation? Why did that child die? Because of sin. What an evil then must sin be, when God thus marks it with His displeasure. And if it be so hateful, as seen in a child, what must it be as seen in mature life? Your little one may have been saved without believing, because it was incapable of faith; but can you be saved without believing? "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Think what God has done to save thee. He gave His only begotten Son to a life of poverty and scorn, and to a death of agony and shame; and it touched thee not. Now He has taken thine own loved one to rouse you from your indifference. Is it not for thy salvation, that regularly as the morning light greets thee, little eyes which you never wearied looking

into, bend on thee beseechingly, and a familiar voice which ever sounded sweetly, says, "Come up hither?"

"I have seen men in worldly prosperity," says Mr Beecher. "Nothing could face them. Nothing could preach to them. Nothing could soften them. They loved their children dearly. God took one of these children. And I have seen the death of the little child wear upon that rugged nature. I have seen that proud man cry as though he were a child himself. I have seen that hard-hearted man soften. He would sit down and talk with you by the half-hour about his little child that died. I have seen a man that went thundering through New York with business enough to occupy a hundred men—a man keen and sagacious; a man that only those of power and experience could meet in a bargain; a man full of exactitudes; a man bold, close, successful, skilful; a man organised to drive among men, to fight among men, to achieve among men—I have seen such a man, who would take you aside in the store and talk to you about that little child that died, and would not let you go. If you apologised for absorbing his time and started to leave, he would say, 'No: stop! stop!' and he would talk on for half-an-hour longer. And if customers came in, he would put them off by saying, 'I will see you in a moment;' and would go on talking for another half-hour. And he carries the child home with him and talks about it there. The Bible says: 'The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together: and a little child shall lead them.' I have seen great behemoth-natured men led, not by little children alone, but by the memory of little children. I have seen many a man that was softened, and mellowed,

and enriched, and spiritualised; and the sermon that did it, and the sanctuary where it was done, were the sermon of sorrow and the sanctuary of the heart."

4th, *The death of children ought to beget on the part of bereaved parents greater faithfulness to those who survive.*

Did any pious parent ever lay the remains of a child in the grave, without wishing he had acted better a Christian parent's part? David and Eli are not the only instances in which the godly have suffered through parental unfaithfulness. Children, it ought to be remembered, have all the faculties necessary to constitute them religious beings. They have minds that can comprehend much of the truth about sin, death, the soul, and the Saviour. They have hearts capable of loving and hating—wills capable of choosing and rejecting. How very early are all their faculties exercised upon matters pertaining to the present life. From the first dawn of reason they are learning—long before they go to school they are learning; and if good be not set before them, they will accept of evil. No parent is discharging aright his duty, if he is not employing direct means for the religious improvement of his child. Let ministers and others do all they have it in their power to do for them. They cannot do too much. But no amount of service on their part will exempt parents from the duty which is theirs.

5th, *Christian parents may rest in the assurance that their children will be restored to them under happier circumstances.*

In answer to the prayer of the prophet, the child of the Shunammite woman was restored to life. With a higher import Christian parents can adopt her language.

Her child was restored, but it was to a brief and chequered life—again to suffer, and again to die. Christianity is pre-eminently the religion of hope. While it does much for us in the present, it is in the future its richest blessings are to be enjoyed. "Thus saith the Lord; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears —thy children shall come again to their own border." David evidently anticipated re-union with his child. "I shall go to him." Not to the grave. There would have been no comfort in that. There all is unknowing and unknown. How could we sing in heaven, "O death, where is thy sting—O grave, where is thy victory," if they had effected an eternal separation between us and those we love? (Jer. xxxi. 16, 17; 2 Sam. xii. 23; 1 Cor. xv. 55.)

It is a most significant fact, that all the instances of revival from the dead of which we read in Scripture, are instances of restoration to their kindred and friends. It was so with the child of the Shunammite woman—it was so with the widow's son at the gate of Nain—it was so with Lazarus of Bethany—it was so with the daughter of Jairus —it was so with Jesus himself. There is discoverable in all these instances a tender recognition of the longings of the bereaved, and a forwardness to restore the object of wounded affection. Do we not then learn what God will do, from what He has done? Christian families shall be re-united in heaven. Bereaved Christian parents, Jesus shall give back to your bosom the child which He took to His own; and radiant as is its smile, you shall recognise in that glowing face the same over which, in the hour of your agony, you shed the bitter tears of separation.

"Oh! when a mother meets on high,
The babe she lost in infancy,

Hath she not then, for pains and fears,
The day of woe, the watchful night,
For all her sorrow, all her tears,
An overpayment of delight?"

We may learn from this subject, what we owe to the Gospel. It is related of the late Lord Monboddo, that he was bereaved of a much loved child; but ignorant of the Gospel, he sorrowed as those who have no hope. Her picture on the wall only reminded him of his loss. A friend who, one day, had vainly tried to comfort him, rose and drew the curtain which concealed it. "That is kind," said the affected father; "come now and let us read Herodotus." Thus, those who know not Christ can only find relief by excluding from their thoughts all remembrance of the departed.

When the bereaved ask in agony, where is my child?—nature and philosophy only echo—Where? It is Jesus to whom we owe all the comfort, and what is equally good, all the admonition, of which I have been speaking. And by no more acceptable manner can we express our gratitude to Him, than by cherishing the spirit of submission, and greater faithfulness in the future. But as only those who love Jesus can thus feel and act, the first duty of all is to accept Him as a Saviour; and then, when the dispensation comes, we shall not be like mariners in a storm, bewilderingly searching for their chart and compass, but like the disciples, who, although at first affrighted, ultimately recognised, walking upon the billows, One who could not only say, "It is I, be not afraid," but who could allay the tumult with a "Peace, be still!" Blessed are those who in such a case have eyes to penetrate the darkness, and ears to catch above the tumult of waters, the accents which heavenly voices utter:

"I heard the angels singing
As they went up through the sky,
A sweet infant's spirit bringing
To its Father's house on high:
'Happy thou, so soon ascended,
With thy shining raiment on!
Happy thou, whose race is ended
With a crown so quickly won!'
* * * * *
Through the night that dragged so slowly,
Watched a mother by a bed;
Weeping wildly, kneeling lowly,
She would not be comforted.
To her lost one she was clinging,
Raining tears upon a shroud;
And those angel-voices singing
Could not reach her through the cloud."

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